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Purdue College of Pharmacy Experience with Blood Pressure Screenings at the Indiana State Fair

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PURDUE COLLEGE OF PHARMACY EXPERIENCE WITH BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENINGS AT THE INDIANA STATE FAIR

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Jane E. Krause is a clinical associate professor of pharmacy practice at Purdue University and served as a faculty mentor for this project.

INTRODUCTION

Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day and refers to the pressure of blood pushing against the walls of a person's arteries while pumping blood to other parts of the body (CDC, 2020a).

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is a dangerous medical condition that can cause serious health problems if left elevated and untreated for a prolonged period of time (Whelton et al., 2018).

Hypertension is often called “the silent killer” because it typically has no signs or symptoms, and patients are often unaware that they are at risk for a heart attack, stroke, heart failure, kidney disease, and eye disease (CDC, 2020a; SCAI, 2014; Whelton et al., 2018). To help raise awareness, Purdue College of Pharmacy students, fellows, and faculty have hosted an annual blood pressure screening at the Hook’s Drug Store Museum during the Indiana State Fair since 2015.

BACKGROUND

Hypertension

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 45% of adults in the United States have hypertension or are taking medication for hypertension (CDC, 2020b) and approximately 35% of adult citizens of Indiana (aged 18 and older) have hypertension (CDC, 2017). Blood pressure readings are recorded with two numbers measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg), listed as a fraction with one number over the other (SCAI, 2014). The top number, or systolic pressure, is the force of blood when the heart is contracting, and the bottom number, or diastolic pressure, is the force of blood against the artery walls while the heart rests.

Based on the most recent (2017) American College of Cardiology (ACC) and American Heart Association (AHA) guidelines for the detection, prevention, management, and treatment of high blood pressure, hypertension is defined as a blood pressure reading of greater than or equal to 130/80 mmHg (Whelton et al., 2018) (Table 1). These guidelines are the successor to the seventh *Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure* (JNC7) issued in 2003. These previous guidelines (2003) had a higher threshold of greater than or equal to 140/90 mmHg to define hypertension (Chobanian et al., 2003).

Table 1. Categories of blood pressure in adults (Whelton et al., 2018).

BP Category	Systolic Blood Pressure		Diastolic Blood Pressure
Normal	< 120 mmHg	and	< 80 mmHg
Elevated	120–129 mmHg	and	< 80 mmHg
Hypertension			
Stage 1	130–139 mmHg	or	80–89 mmHg
Stage 2	≥ 140 mmHg	or	≥ 90 mmHg

Blood pressures can easily be measured with a sphygmomanometer, also known as a blood pressure monitor, which consists of an inflatable cuff wrapped around the patient’s arm, a measuring unit, and a mechanism for cuff inflation, which may be a manually operated bulb and valve or an automated pump (Practical Clinical Skills, n.d.).

As part of the Doctor of Pharmacy curriculum, students are trained on how to assess and interpret patient vital signs including blood pressure, pulse, and respirations per minute. Additionally, pharmacy students learn about non-medication-based and medication-based treatment options for high blood pressure. Lifestyle changes, also called nonpharmacological interventions, are recommended for all patients with high blood pressure (Whelton et al., 2018). Recommended lifestyle changes include weight loss, a heart-healthy diet, a low-sodium diet, increased physical activity, and limited alcohol intake. In addition to lifestyle changes, medications may be used to lower blood pressure.

It is estimated that one in five patients with hypertension is unaware of his/her diagnosis and risk for complications (Farley et al., 2010). Patients with uncontrolled hypertension are at higher risk for serious health events including cerebral vascular accidents, heart disease, and even death (Littenberg et al., 1990). When properly managed and treated, the risks of hypertension can be minimized. Blood pressure screenings present minimal risk and demonstrate significant benefits, especially in undiagnosed patients.

Pharmacist Involvement

As the profession of pharmacy continues to evolve, so does the role of a pharmacist. A community-based pharmacist is one of the most easily available and accessible health care professionals to the general public (Law et al., 2011). Pharmacists have been involved in the clinical management of hypertension for over 40 years, and it has been found that they have a positive impact in the optimization of medication therapy management of chronic disease states such as hypertension (Mattei et al., 1973). In 2015, the RxACTION study evaluated the impact of pharmacists and prescribing on patients in the community setting (Tsuyuki et al., 2015). Patients in the pharmacist intervention group received enhanced pharmacist care including lifestyle coaching, education handouts, medication reviews, and titration or adjustment of hypertension medications. As a result, blood pressure readings in the pharmacist intervention group were 6.6/3.2 mmHg lower than the control group and

2.3 times more likely to be at blood pressure goal. It was concluded from this study that pharmacists may have a positive effect on lowering blood pressures when involved in blood pressure screenings and patient care.

Health Fairs

A health fair is a community-based event centered on providing health screenings and health education. Common topics include chronic disease states such as dyslipidemia, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, nutrition, and hypertension (Hess et al., 2012). Health fairs reduce barriers to accessing care by providing free or low-cost care and reducing time constraints by often being hosted during weekends or outside of normal business hours (Murray et al., 2014). Community health fairs can improve the health outcomes of their participants through free and accessible health care. Health care professionals including nurses, physicians, dietitians, counselors, and pharmacists are examples of health care professionals who volunteer their time at health fairs and screening events. Pharmacy students often volunteer, participate, and enrich health fairs. For example, a 2012 study evaluated the impact of pharmacy students at health fairs hosted by Western University College of Pharmacy (Hess et al., 2012). This study assessed patient knowledge and motivation to follow up with a physician. Participants completed a pre- and postknowledge survey consisting of multiple-choice questions on specific disease states. Postscores were statistically significantly higher as compared to prescores in all disease state categories. In addition, 78% of those patients with an abnormal health fair result indicated they would follow up with their health care provider.

Published data on the impact of health fairs and health screenings hosted at state fairs are limited. It is estimated that 8,000–10,000 fairgoers were impacted by a nutrition education health fair hosted by the University of Iowa's Extension Service and held at the Iowa State Fair, while of these, over 4,000 individuals who completed a survey received an educational placemat on portion size (Penisten & Litchfield, 2004).

Since 2001 the Minnesota State Fair has hosted "Health Fair 11," offering free and low-cost health care screenings through its partner organizations (Health Fair 11, 2019). Over 1.3 million health care connections and screenings have been documented at this public event. Similarly, each year the Kentucky State Fair hosts "Health Horizons" where fairgoers participate in 10 no-cost health screenings (Kentucky State Fair, 2019). Other notable activities at "Health Horizons" include

health education events, discussion panels, and blood donation drives. It is estimated that "Health Horizons" has reached an audience of over 600,000 fairgoers.

Through Internet searches, there is some evidence that schools/colleges of pharmacy host health screenings at state fairs. For example, the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy provides education on poison control and drug safety at the Iowa State Fair, based on the 2019 fair schedule (University of Iowa, n.d.). In addition, the South Dakota State University College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions hosts screenings for blood pressure, blood glucose, and cholesterol at the South Dakota State Fair (South Dakota State University, 2019). This article adds to the limited literature available on the impact of health fairs led by pharmacy students and held at state fairs.

With this background in mind, the objectives of this community outreach initiative were (1) to describe an ongoing, student-led blood pressure screening at the Indiana State Fair in conjunction with the Purdue College of Pharmacy and the Hook's Drug Store Museum, and (2) to assess the impact on the volunteers and community participants. The Hook's Drug Store Museum, located at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis, was founded in 1966 and has hosted an estimated 3 million visitors since its start (Hook's Drug Store Museum, n.d.). It is authentically built to look like a drugstore from 1900 and is named after a chain of drugstores founded by John A. Hook, which was located throughout Indiana for 94 years (from 1900 to 1994). The museum offers a historically beautiful, educational, and high-traffic venue to host a blood pressure screening during the Indiana State Fair (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Hook's Drug Store Museum. Photo: Bruce Carlstedt.

METHODOLOGY

Under the mentorship of three pharmacy faculty members, third- and fourth-professional year pharmacy students and pharmacy fellows have held a nine-hour blood pressure screening health fair at the Indiana State Fair in Indianapolis for the last five years (2015–2019). Each year, the health fair is held in the education room of the Hook’s Drug Store Museum (Figure 2). Two months prior to the state fair, pharmacy students and fellow volunteers sign up in teams of 3–4 to host the event for three-hour blocks of time. The Purdue College of Pharmacy blood pressure screening has traditionally occurred on the second Friday of the Indiana State Fair each August.

Promotion of the blood pressure screening to fairgoers has been restricted to advertising signs placed in the museum on the day of the event (Figure 3). On those days, signs are placed on the front door and throughout the museum. In addition, volunteers in other areas of the museum assist by suggesting and directing fairgoers entering the museum to visit the blood pressure screening held in the education room. Because there is constant traffic in and out of the museum, this process of alerting fairgoers to the health fair has worked well.

Adult fairgoers visiting the screening had their blood pressure measured by the students and fellows using automated blood pressure devices. Automated blood pressure devices are utilized because of the noise from high traffic in the museum and to minimize variation between volunteers. Each reading was recorded in one of three categories: ≤ 140 mmHg/ ≤ 90 mmHg, > 140 mmHg/ > 90 mmHg, or > 150 mmHg/ > 100 mmHg.



Figure 2. Screening volunteers. Photo: Jane Krause.

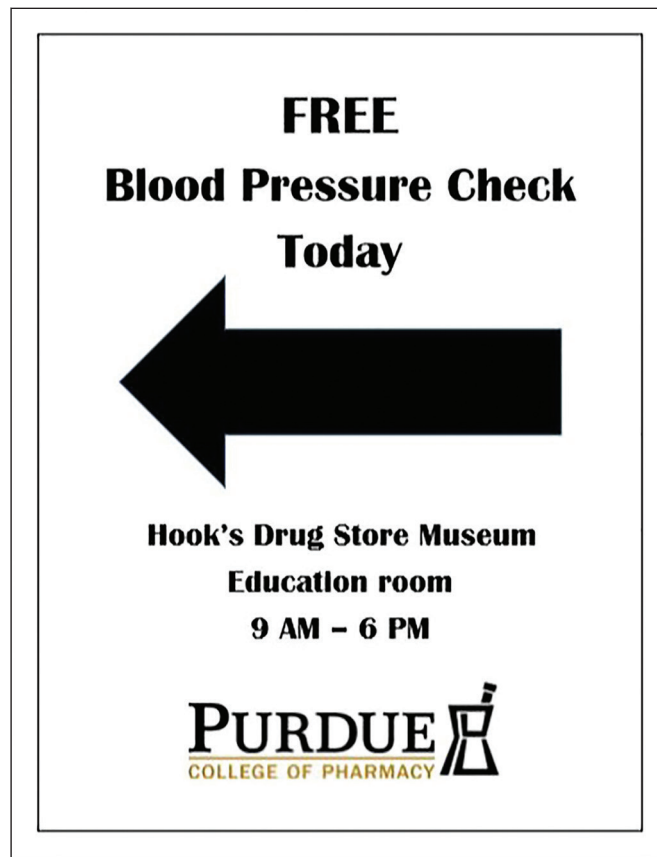


Figure 3. Promotional sign.

No other patient-specific information was obtained or recorded. Since this project began in 2015, blood pressure guidelines have been revised. However, for consistency, the blood pressure categories utilized for this project remained constant for the five-year data collection and consistent with the JNC7 guidelines issued in 2003. The Purdue University Institutional Review Board granted this study exempt status.

All participants in the blood pressure screening were counseled one-on-one regarding lifestyle modifications, risks of untreated hypertension, and the need to contact their primary care physician, as appropriate. In addition, each individual received a small card with his/her blood pressure reading, a blood pressure recorder pocket pal, a stress ball in the shape of a capsule, and a sticker that reads “I had my blood pressure checked at the Indiana State Fair/Purdue College of Pharmacy” (Figure 4). Pharmacy students participating in the event completed a reflection following their involvement describing how the community outreach initiative impacted them, along with suggestions for refinements.

In 2019, Phi Lambda Sigma (PLS) Leadership Society in the College of Pharmacy adopted this initiative as its

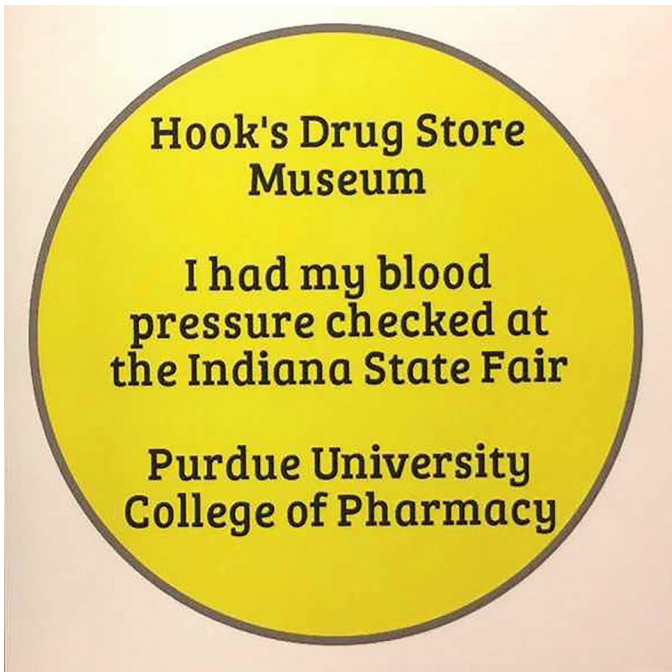


Figure 4. Screening sticker.



Figure 5. Screening giveaways. Photo: Jane Krause.

annual community outreach project. Consequently, PLS student members now assist with volunteer recruitment and planning for the event. In addition, two members of this leadership society authored and obtained funding through the Purdue Office of Engagement Community Service/Service-Learning Grant Program allowing the purchase of complimentary items offered to health fair participants (Figure 5).

RESULTS/IMPACT

Community Impact

Data from the blood pressure health fair screening collected from 2015 to 2019 was analyzed for this project (Table 2). Over the five years, a total of 838 fairgoers have utilized the opportunity to have their blood pressure checked while visiting the Indiana State Fair, specifically at the Hook’s Drug Store Museum. It is encouraging to note that there has been growing involvement over the years with 213 individuals visiting the health fair in 2019, which represents a 37% increase from the 155 participants at the inaugural 2015 screening. In addition, the majority of participants each year had a blood pressure measurement falling into the lowest category (≤ 140 mmHg/ ≤ 90 mmHg) with a mean of 64% for the five years. A total of 50 pharmacy students, 2 pharmacy fellows, and 3 College of Pharmacy faculty members have participated in hosting the screening on behalf of the College of Pharmacy and Purdue University.

This project increased the awareness of the community participants regarding hypertension and potential health-related complications associated with uncontrolled hypertension. Pharmacy student volunteers observed that although community members were often aware of blood pressure and hypertension, they were often unaware of the health risks associated with uncontrolled hypertension. This was also apparent through the conversations that took place between the fairgoers and pharmacy students. Once fairgoers visited the health fair and had their blood pressure measured, a pharmacy student interpreted the results through individualized and

Table 2. Indiana State Fair blood pressure screening results.

BP Categories (mmHg)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Current Total
$\leq 140/90$	98 (63%)	67 (59%)	89 (61%)	128 (61%)	155 (73%)	537 (64%)
$> 140/90$	29 (19%)	19 (17%)	29 (20%)	39 (19%)	40 (19%)	156 (19%)
$> 150/100$	28 (18%)	28 (25%)	29 (20%)	42 (20%)	18 (8%)	145 (17%)
Annual Totals	155	114	147	209	213	838

*Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

in-depth patient counseling. By example, this project also increased the awareness of the community members regarding the profession of pharmacy, the variety of services offered by pharmacists, and the role they can play in patient care.

Student Impact

Pharmacy students found the experience to be rewarding both personally and professionally. For example, Samuel L. Stukey reflected, “This service-learning project provided an excellent opportunity to apply my training in a volunteer setting. It allowed me to interact with individuals one-on-one while providing education about hypertension. I found great satisfaction in helping the fairgoers by discussing how their medications and lifestyle impact blood pressure and why this is so important.” In addition, Stukey observed: “This event provided us the opportunity to promote the skill set a pharmacist possesses. Many fairgoers were not aware of the clinical services offered by the pharmacy profession. I was excited to help advance the profession while also proudly representing the Purdue College of Pharmacy.”

Emily B. Vahary was involved in securing funding and procuring supplies for the blood pressure screening, as well as participating as a volunteer during the event. She wrote, “While hypertension is a common disease state, I found that some individuals had limited knowledge about elevated blood pressure and its long-term effects. This experience assisted me in gaining a better understanding of the general public’s knowledge of hypertension and other metabolic disorders, and it will support me in providing better and more effective care to my patients in the future.”

Looking to the future, Stukey also commented, “Health fairs provide excellent opportunities for patients to receive education and screenings while allowing students to volunteer and make a positive impact on the overall health of the communities they serve. As a future health care professional, I plan to volunteer and serve the communities where I live and work while also promoting such service-learning opportunities to pharmacy students I interact with and instruct in the future. Because of this positive experience, I look forward to continuing to volunteer at the Hook’s Drug Store Museum during the Indiana State Fair. I am fortunate for and appreciate the opportunity to take part in this project.”

In terms of project refinements, Vahary noted that during the recruitment process, some students were unable to volunteer due to already established obligations that day

at their assigned Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) sites. To help with this, Vahary suggested, “For planning purposes, it would be best if interested students alerted their August pharmacist preceptors one or two months ahead of time regarding this learning opportunity and their interest in participating.” In addition, Vahary commented, “This event is conveniently set up to reach many individuals and some of those may not be receiving necessary medical attention. Therefore, it might be beneficial to include other forms of screening and preventive care in the future, such as body mass index (BMI) checks, point of care testing, and diet education. This would not only increase the number of services and interventions available to fairgoers, but also provide opportunities for students to apply additional clinical skill sets.”

CONCLUSION

The blood pressure screening health fair in conjunction with the Hook’s Drug Store Museum and held during the Indiana State Fair has become a unique, successful, ongoing service-learning tradition and collaboration for the College of Pharmacy. This initiative is mutually beneficial to all involved and allows the pharmacy student volunteers to refine communication abilities and apply their clinical knowledge to interactions with community members. In addition, it allows pharmacy students to learn from college faculty while providing a valuable service to members of the community. We hope that the information shared in this article increases awareness regarding the importance of blood pressure management and the benefits of health fairs, while providing ideas for others to offer a similar community outreach initiative.

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