The Indian Health Board of Minneapolis, Inc. (IHB) is an Urban Indian Clinic and community health center serving the urban American Indian population in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis. The IHB Women’s Health Program is available to any Native American woman over the age of 21. It is designed to detect breast and cervical cancer (BCC) early and to improve the medical care given to women who have abnormal findings from BCC screening. The IHB Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) prevention program is available to any Native American over the age of 18 that is at risk for heart disease and stroke. It is designed to aid in reducing the risk factors that can lead to heart disease and stroke and to decrease obesity by increasing physical activity and healthy eating as well as increase knowledge of CVD risk factors.

The American Indian population faces high rates of breast and cervical cancer. According to Cancer (2008), cervical cancer rates are 69% higher in the American Indian population in comparison to the non-Hispanic White population. American Indians have a higher incidence of cardiovascular disease than their Non-Hispanic White counterparts. The Urban Indian Health Institute Community Health Profile, released in December 2011, identified heart disease as one of the most common causes of death among American Indians in Hennepin/Ramsey County. The goal for IHB’s BCC program is to teach participants about the importance of screenings for BCC and making lifestyle changes to reduce their risk for BCC. The goal for IHB’s CVD program focuses on providing program participants with strategies to reduce the risk factors that cause heart disease and stroke.

The Indian Health Board of Minneapolis is a part of the Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative (EHDI) through Minnesota Department of Health’s Office of Minority and Multicultural Health.

Program Contact  Lois Brown, IHB Health Disparities Supervisor  612.721.9836  brown@ihb-mpls.org
Successes

- Women who were due for a mammogram or pap smear were notified and linked to screening sites.
- Partnering with other agencies such as American Cancer Society, American Indian Cancer Foundation, Sage program, and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, helps provide access to mammograms and pap smears with the added benefit of lessening the burden of cost to the participant.
- Reaching people in the community through health activities such as offering CPR and opportunities for physical activity.

Challenges

- Staff turnover in the position of Women’s Health Case Manager.
- Retaining participants for the full 10-week CVD program.
- Transportation is a major barrier to participation in both programs. IHB has provided transportation and provided bus tokens to participants.

Cost Savings

The BCC Screening program is having an economic impact through the quality education and outreach provided, empowering women and families to take ownership of their health and teaching them how to eat healthier, get more exercise, get to and maintain a healthy weight, which all contribute to preventing cancer. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, Cardiovascular Disease is the second leading cause of death in Minnesota, accounting for nearly $1 billion in hospital costs each year. Through education, smoking cessation, and opportunities for physical activity, IHB’s CVD program is able to address risk factors such as high blood pressure and cholesterol, tobacco use, obesity, and physical inactivity before they become costly.

Key Evaluation Findings 2012-2013

Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening

- 265 American Indian women received information about BCC screening. 236 or 89% were contacted about scheduling if they due/overdue for screening, 183 received mammograms and pap smears, and almost all received their test results.
- Of the 113 women that attended Women’s Health Days, the program was able to identify those who had not had a physical (26%), mammogram (30%), and pap smear (32%) in 2 or more years. Of the 90 participants who completed evaluation surveys, over 90% rated the information they received on BCC, mammograms and pap smears as “very helpful.”

Heart Disease and Stroke

- Held 14 blood pressure screening events and provided results to 294 individuals. IHB was able to identify among them those at risk and was able to refer them to testing, medical care, and prevention education.
- 66 men and women met with the CVD Educator, 33 of whom (58%) completed a risk assessment survey and received cholesterol tests, blood pressure readings, and calculation of their BMI.
- Two participants completed follow-up assessments of their eating and activity behaviors. Both lost weight and improved their blood pressure and BMI, one had improved cholesterol, and one had improved dietary and activity habits.

Sharing Our Stories

At a program event held with the American Indian Cancer Foundation, a woman raised her hand to share her story with the group. She started by telling how she noticed a lump under her arm one day while getting ready for the day. She ignored it thinking that it wasn’t a big deal. She ignored the lump until she could no longer lift her arm, and at this point decided she should go see the doctor. The participant began to cry as she told the group she was diagnosed with cancer. She told the women there that she was lucky to be alive; because she ignored it for so long it was much harder to treat. She stressed to the women that it was important to do the screenings and see the doctor if they noticed anything abnormal. This woman shared her story with the group and it was a big success. It is often hard for women to talk about something this personal, but in a supportive environment they are able to learn from each other.