

Grant Outcome Report

Testing a University-wide Campaign Against Diabetes

The Problem

Diabetes is a growing epidemic in New York State. Nearly 1.8 million New Yorkers have diabetes, including 800,000 people in New York City. In addition, another 4.5 million New Yorkers are estimated to have prediabetes, a condition that puts them at high risk for developing diabetes and its complications.

In 2005, the City University of New York (CUNY) Urban Health Collaborative (Collaborative) was awarded a five-year National Institutes of Health Roadmap Award to develop interdisciplinary graduate courses that demonstrated practice-based models of improving urban health. The Collaborative organized scientific meetings; created interdisciplinary courses and programs; and convened researchers to develop new community-based projects. One initiative that emerged was the Campaign Against Diabetes (CAD), a campuswide diabetes prevention and management program to help reduce the incidence of uncontrolled diabetes among CUNY students, staff members, and faculty. In 2007, NYSHealth awarded a grant to CUNY to support and pilot several components of CAD.

Grant Activities and Outcomes

The CAD initiative had a three-part objective to develop, pilot, and evaluate the following:

- Prevention campaigns to make healthier food and more physical activity available on campus and to encourage behavior change;
- Diabetes management workshops; and
- Education/support groups for students and faculty with or at risk for diabetes.

CAD conducted a needs assessment of faculty, employees, and students to assess risk factors and diabetes prevalence at three of its campuses: Hunter College, Hostos Community College, and Medgar Evers College. Based on the CAD surveys and City and national diabetes data, CUNY estimated that approximately 47,000 faculty members, staff members, and students had diabetes, including 15,000 people with undiagnosed diabetes. Survey results helped CUNY tailor specific diabetes interventions for each campus, including a 10-hour diabetes self-management class led by certified diabetes educators.

KEY INFORMATION:

GRANTEE

City University of New York (CUNY), Hunter College

GRANT TITLE

CUNY Campaign Against Diabetes

DATES

August 2007 – July 2011

GRANT AMOUNT

\$300,000

FUNDING

Improving Diabetes Prevention and Management

CAD also conducted a survey of the food served on CUNY campuses, and it found that many meals were high in fat, low in fiber, and energy dense. The assessment also found that although healthy foods were available, several barriers to accessing these foods existed, including cost and preparation time.

The assessment results were used to develop a report, "What's for Lunch at CUNY?," with recommendations for CUNY administration to improve food service on campus.¹ The report's recommendations included: (1) mandating that CUNY vendors meet the New York City Food Standards for all food sold and meals served on campuses; (2) subsidizing a healthy, low-cost daily special at CUNY cafeterias; (3) requiring CUNY cafeterias to post fat content and calorie information; and (4) eliminating pouring rights contracts at CUNY, which allow one beverage company to have a monopoly at a campus in exchange for a payment to the college. CAD's director gave a briefing on the report to all CUNY health and safety officers, who are responsible for ensuring that CUNY complies with all relevant City and State regulations. Student teams working with CAD circulated petitions asking Hunter College and CUNY administrators to implement the report's recommendations and organize campus-based activities in support of changes to their campus food environment. CAD's project director also offered feedback to Hunter College when it reviewed its food service contract, which resulted in revised expectations for contractors (e.g., making free water available in addition to soda). The winning bidder hired by Hunter College made health and sustainability a higher priority than previous contractors.

Over the grant period, CAD conducted a number of campuswide education and assessment events on a range of topics, including diabetes prevention and management; diabetes risk assessments and HbA1c testing; and healthy eating and weight management.

CAD also initiated campus walking groups with the goals of meeting twice a week and participants walking 10,000 steps each a day. The walking groups achieved mixed success in both engaging and retaining participants. Challenges included schedule conflicts with walk times, poor weather, and a perceived lack of authority among group leaders attempting to motivate faculty and staff participants.

CAD provided student health centers with materials such as a diabetes resource manual, diabetes prevention posters, stair prompts, and glucose meters. Although CAD was unable to measure if there was a correlation between CAD materials and an improvement in student health, health center staff members reported an increased awareness of and knowledge about diabetes. CAD did encounter some challenges



¹ Read the report: <http://www.cuny.edu/about/centers-and-institutes/urban-health/campaign-against-diabetes/policyreports/WhatsForLunchAtCuny.pdf>

while engaging with student health centers. This included a perceived sense of competition between CAD and the health centers, as CAD had the ability to bring in external resources to conduct activities, whereas the health centers were limited in both funding and scope. To address this issue, CAD agreed to coordinate its health events with the health centers' programming prior to launching activities.

In spring 2009, CAD organized a policy briefing on obesity in New York City, which was attended by more than 70 legislative representatives, dietitians, nurses, community organizers, and other public health workers. At the briefing, CAD presented a report, "Reversing the Diabetes and Obesity Epidemics in New York City,"² in partnership with the Public Health Association of New York City. The briefing's main goal was to raise awareness among legislators and other policymakers about the importance of promoting healthy food while also making unhealthy food less available and reducing its aggressive promotion.

During the grant period, CAD faced some recruitment difficulties, especially for diabetes self-management programs and education/awareness events. Scheduling issues were one of the most significant barriers to recruitment. Students have schedules that change semester to semester, faculty members are constantly pressed for time, and staff members may face unpredictable changes in shift work or supervisors who do not understand the value of diabetes prevention activities. Conveying the importance diabetes prevention and management activities and developing new ways of delivering these activities would help to address such barriers. nurse champions and the Seton Health team conducted trainings for 32 primary care sites to introduce them to diabetes quality improvement practices. Through the work of the nurse champions and the team, Seton Health submitted 10 NCQA applications; a total of 7 practices achieved recognition.

The Future

Although the project aimed to test new methods of slowing the rising diabetes epidemic in New York City, it was difficult to assess the long-term impact of the changes made within the CUNY system and on its test campuses. To better assess impact, future projects should consider including a planning phase and a strong evaluation component that fully considers metrics prior to starting grant activities.

Though it did not achieve all of its objectives, CAD was able to raise the visibility of the issues of diabetes and obesity; create a network of supporters and champions for continued work; and build platforms for ongoing work. In 2011, CAD planners and leaders engaged CUNY and selected external stakeholders in a discussion about creating a Healthy CUNY initiative that sought to make CUNY a national leader in promoting the health of urban populations over the next decade. This effort built on CAD's successes while also addressing its shortcomings.

²Read the report: http://www.cuny.edu/about/centers-and-institutes/urban-health/campaign-against-diabetes/policyreports/diabetes_prevention_report.pdf.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ABOUT THE GRANTEE

City University of New York (CUNY) is the largest urban public university in the nation. It comprises 23 institutions, including 11 senior colleges, 6 community colleges, and several professional and graduate schools. CUNY serves more than 226,000 degree-credit students and 230,000 adult, continuing, and professional education students. Its campuses are located throughout New York City, and it is the region's largest supplier of health providers, teachers, and other professionals. CUNY employs more than 6,000 full-time faculty and several thousand part-time faculty and support staff.

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