

Finalist Executive Summary: Hosparus Health Southern Indiana

Heart disease is the most common cause of death in American women, taking approximately one life per minute.¹ In the United States, almost one in four women dies from heart disease.² Hosparus Health recognizes the need to support patients living with advanced heart disease. In May 2018, we piloted an innovative Heart Connection Program in the Louisville area. Results were so dramatic that we expanded the program to our entire footprint this April. Your grant will provide two years of care and support to approximately 100 women living with advanced heart disease in Clark, Floyd and Harrison Counties.

The Heart Connection Program provides a customized plan of care based on the patient's needs, with support provided by an interdisciplinary team. We offer access to 24-hour clinical support for questions or symptom management needs. Each patient receives the tools to assist in managing their symptoms including a digital scale and symptom tracking tool. Care is provided in consultation with the patient's physician, cardiologist and/or a Hosparus Health physician.

Hosparus Health recognizes the stress and fear our patients endure when confronted with a hospitalization related to their heart disease. While advanced heart disease cannot be cured, the symptoms of the disease can be managed if closely watched. Our customized monitoring tools and ongoing education give patients and caregivers the awareness of and ability to detect symptoms early, preventing most emergency room or hospital visits. The 2018 pilot of this program reflected that patients enrolled in the program lived twice as long as patients not enrolled and had a less than 5% hospital readmission rate. Although not typical, three hospice patients during the pilot phase of the Heart Connection Program saw their disease symptoms decline and health improve. These three patients were discharged as they were no longer hospice eligible. Countless other patients have been able to follow their plan of care, extending their lives and allowing for more memories to be made with loved ones – more births to celebrate, marriages to witness, graduations to cheer, and holidays to share.

¹<https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/about-heart-disease-in-women/facts>

²<https://www.womenshealth.gov/heart-disease-and-stroke/heart-disease/heart-disease-and-women>

Institutional History

Hosparus Health was founded in 1978 by community members who saw the need for a new kind of compassionate end-of-life care. Our teams of healthcare professionals and specially trained volunteers provide symptom control, medication management, personal care and counseling, and spiritual care for patients with life-limiting illness. Our Kourageous Kids pediatric program allows families to continue to seek a cure while receiving our services. We also provide grief counseling and programs to help people of all ages deal with their loss. All services are provided regardless of ability to pay. In 2019, we are serving more than 1,100 patients a day, and are on target to serve more than 8,000 patients annually in a 37-county service area that includes Southern Indiana, the Louisville metropolitan area, Central and Southern Kentucky. We are accredited by the Joint Commission, earning their Gold Seal of Approval, and in 2019 were named as one of the Best Places to Work in Healthcare, a national ranking.

The Need

The American Heart Association reports nearly half of all adult Americans have some form of cardiovascular disease. While that is a staggering statistic so is the realization that heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States, killing 299,578 women in 2017.³ That is almost one in every four females in the US. These patients are vastly under-served, often making frequent emergency room visits because they are unable to manage their symptoms independently at home. Gaps

in care contribute to the \$32-billion annual cost of treatment, and as heart disease continues to grow within our community the effects are becoming more overwhelming. Nearly 20% of Hosparus Health's patients have a diagnosis of advanced heart disease, and of those more than half are female. In 2018, we served 98 patients with heart disease in Clark, Floyd and Harrison counties. Of those 48 were female. The challenges of heart disease in our community include a high prevalence of smoking and frequent mental distress, as well as high risk factors including obesity, diabetes, kidney disease, alcohol abuse, drug abuse and low economic status.⁴ Lack of family and community support is also a factor.

³ Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2017 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December 2018. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999-2017, Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Centers for Disease Control.

⁴<https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/CHD/state/IN>

The Program

The Heart Connection Program will match women suffering from heart disease who have hospice eligibility with an interdisciplinary team who can provide the tools and care to help delay the progress of the disease. Managing symptoms remains a key part of the patient's goal-centered care. This includes weekly nurse visits to ensure that patients are monitoring their symptoms and to allow us to respond to any changes in a timely fashion. Patients will be given the tools to track weight gain or loss as well as frequent disease specific symptoms including shortness of breath, fatigue and chest pain. Hosparus Health Heart Connection Program's visit design should prevent emergency room visits and hospital readmissions with early detection and management of symptoms, as shown in our pilot.

Outcomes and Measurement

Hosparus Health Southern Indiana will gather data and report on measurable outcomes that indicate program success or failure. Expected outcomes include reductions in symptoms including swelling, chest pain, shortness of breath, coughing/wheezing, fatigue and confusion. These results will be measured through daily record keeping by the patient with weekly reporting. We will also measure the number of emergency room visits and hospitalizations as well as length of treatment by Hosparus Health (length of life). This data will be compared to heart patients not enrolled in the program as well as to national averages. In addition, we will measure patient satisfaction and quality of life through formal questionnaires and informal conversation. Finally, we will measure percentage of women utilizing this program as compared to number of qualified patients.

A Story

Thelma (88) lived alone in a rural town with limited support. Her son found her unresponsive following a cardiac event. Hosparus Health assisted with a transfer to the home of granddaughter Kim. Thelma was strong willed – a little cantankerous, the family said. Her goal was to continue to live with Kim without further hospitalization, and to maintain her dignity. Through Heart Connection, Thelma changed her diet so that her weight dropped and swelling in her legs decreased. She was able to wear her normal clothes and shoes again. When her brother in law was dying, she spent quality time with him. Her family writes that she even attended his funeral. “She walked around the entire funeral home talking, hugging and making sure she told each and every person that she loved them. She was saying her goodbyes that way ... That is what Hosparus gave us. The peace of mind that Granny went on her terms.”

Conclusion

Heart disease is the most common cause of death in American women. Through Hosparus Health Southern Indiana Heart Connection Program, women will receive the tools with which to track, monitor and manage their disease. We anticipate that women patients will live longer with fewer distressing symptoms while also improving their quality of life. Our goal is nothing less than to empower women and their families to live life fully each and every day.