

## Cardiovascular Health Community of Practice: Leveraging Partnerships to Improve Heart Health in Los Angeles



### Introduction

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) works to protect health, prevent disease, and promote the health and well-being of over 10 million Los Angeles County residents. Through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded Solutions for Healthier Communities (SHC) initiative, DPH is engaging in a number of activities aimed at addressing hypertension and high cholesterol detection and management to improve the cardiovascular health of Angelenos. One of the initiative's key activities has been to formalize its partnership with the University of Southern California (USC) School of Pharmacy to promote the scale and spread of pharmacist-led comprehensive medication management (CMM)

services. Through this effort, USC School of Pharmacy's California Right Meds Collaborative is providing individuals and organizations with consultation and training services to build capacity to deliver CMM to target populations with severe chronic diseases. Strategic partnerships with experts in the field allow DPH to effectively stretch its resources and achieve greater impact in the community.

### Challenge

In Los Angeles County there are 1.7 million adults with hypertension, the majority of whom do not have their condition under control (51.7%). While there have been substantial improvements in population level hypertension control (28.5% during 1999-2006 to 48.3% during 2007-2014)<sup>1</sup>, rates are still far below the Million Hearts® target of 80% by 2022.<sup>2</sup> Evidence strongly suggests that the integration of pharmacists into the healthcare team can lead to positive patient outcomes







for a number of conditions including hypertension. In addition to being effective, pharmacists are easily accessible in clinical and community settings and are widely trusted by the community as healthcare providers. However, it is widely recognized that pharmacists remain an underutilized resource within the healthcare system and that more can be done so that these professionals can practice at the “top of their license.” Recognizing this need and opportunity, DPH sought to promote the adoption of pharmacist-led CMM as a strategy to improve hypertension and high cholesterol management across the county.

## Solution

In 2013, State Senate Bill 493 shifted pharmacy practice in California by declaring pharmacists to be “health care providers” who can bill for services; allowing pharmacists to independently initiate and administer certain medications and immunizations via approved protocols; and authorizing an advanced practice pharmacist board recognition program. This change in pharmacists’ scope of practice created a backdrop for wider use of CMM. To build local capacity to deliver CMM, DPH partnered with the USC School of Pharmacy to strengthen and spread their California Right Meds Collaborative which was formally launched in October 2018. Based in Los Angeles, the Collaborative works closely with local individuals and organizations and with pharmacist, health plan, and medical system leadership throughout

the state and beyond. In addition to providing practical tools for working with patients, the Collaborative helps practitioners navigate state requirements for collaborative practice agreements and Advanced Practice Pharmacist recognition.



## Results

As a result of the partnership, the Collaborative has been able to increase its capacity to provide training and technical support services, which include: certification courses for clinical pharmacists and pharmacy technicians; tools and resources to establish routine use of data for quality improvement; and support to establish collaborative practice agreements between pharmacies and primary care providers. The partnership has the potential to have wide reach as Los Angeles County is home to over 9,000 licensed pharmacists and even more pharmacy technicians and interns. Although the Collaborative is relatively new, it draws from the rich experience and expertise of the USC School of Pharmacy and its many partners including DPH. The Collaborative’s commitment to working to developing sustainable, value-based models is expected to lead to meaningful impact on pharmacy practice in the region and across the state.



## Lessons Learned

DPH has benefited greatly from its strategic partnership with the USC School of Pharmacy and the California Right Meds Collaborative. By developing partnerships with experts in the field, DPH has been able to effectively stretch its resources and achieve greater impact in the community. Rather than attempt to build out internal capacity from scratch, working with partner organizations from different sectors and that have deep roots in the community has allowed DPH to leverage existing capacity. In addition to seeking partners with the right experience, DPH seeks partners that have shared interests and a demonstrated commitment to working with target populations. This has proved a critical strategy especially when implementing grant-funded, time-sensitive initiatives such as the SHC initiative.

USC School of Pharmacy's California Right Meds Collaborative website offers a number of resources for individuals and organizations interested in expanding or improving their CMM delivery ([http://calrightmeds.org/?page\\_id=37](http://calrightmeds.org/?page_id=37)).

## Citations

1. Hales, C.M., Carroll, M.D., Simon, P.A., Kuo, T., & Ogden, C.L. (2017). Hypertension prevalence, awareness, treatment, and control among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years - Los Angeles County, 1999-2006 and 2007-2014. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 66(32), 846-849. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6632a3
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (March 2019). Million Hearts® at CDC. Retrieved from [https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/files/MH\\_At\\_A\\_Glance\\_2022-508.pdf](https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/files/MH_At_A_Glance_2022-508.pdf)

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