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Page Tomlinson

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An Initiative to Educate and Support Young Adults Diagnosed with Hypertension
Page Tomlinson, BS, RN, DNP Candidate at the University of Vermont
Project Advisor: Margaret Aitken, DNP, APRN
Community Partner: Jennifer Allaire, MS, APRN

Background
Hypertension is a common diagnosis in the US with significant long-term effects. While guidelines for optimal blood pressure management exist for adults diagnosed with hypertension, young adults lag behind older adults in treatment and control[1,2]. The young adult is arguably more capable of lifestyle changes, primarily due to fewer physical limitations than older adults. Promotion of disease self-management is the most effective way to engage young adults in seeking control over their blood pressure[1,3]. Lifestyle modification as a young adult decreases costs of treatment and control for cardiovascular events, while lack of guidance and support at this stage of life may increase risk for cardiac events over their lifetime.

Methods
Patients aged 18-39 years with diagnosis of hypertension were identified. A questionnaire on self-efficacy in hypertension management was sent and preference for lifestyle modification counseling (LMC) was assessed. LMC was offered in their preferred format at their convenience. Follow up calls were placed and semi-structured interviews conducted. Provider survey conducted.

Results
Three patients discussed their experience of being diagnosed with hypertension in semi-structured interviews. Fourteen patients were not interested in discussing their experience or receiving lifestyle modification counseling in any format. High provider survey response identified their perception that a lack of symptoms was the biggest barrier to young adult patients engaging in self-management behaviors. Patient information handout geared towards young adults with hypertension was created and can be added to the after-visit summary via insertion of a smart phrase in the electronic health record.

Implications for Practice
Meet patients where they are:
1. Provide education on hypertension and its implications
2. Encourage self-management and lifestyle change
3. Reinforce education regularly
4. Motivate and empower patients

References: