



Beth Ulschmid, Director



Annalise Shippee, PA-C

The Journey Begins

What does it take for a person to successfully lose weight and prevent diabetes? In Perham, MN, the journey for one individual began with behind the scenes work at the local clinic four years prior to the weight loss success. In 2012, Perham Health was awarded Community Wellness Grant (CWG) funding to work with PartnerSHIP 4 Health, local public health and community partners in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail and Wilkin counties, to address prediabetes among its patient population.

Under the guidance of PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health formed an interprofessional team to focus on prediabetes. Beth Ulschmid, Director of Clinic Operations, led the team and recruited Annalise Shippee, Certified Physician Assistant (PA-C), as the provider champion, as well as representatives from administration, management, population health, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy and respiratory therapy departments. This team reviewed prediabetes facts, evidence-based screening procedures and the clinic's current process. They discovered they needed to revise their process to better identify patients with prediabetes and to offer those patients support. The team drafted an action plan and then met monthly to track progress, address barriers and set goals.

One goal was to add prediabetes information to staff meetings to increase awareness, including the reality that one in three adults have prediabetes, yet most of them do not know that they have it. The team devised strategies to

improve the identification process, such as chart reviews to identify patients whose most recent blood sugar level was in the prediabetic range, thus warranting a follow-up test to confirm a prediabetes diagnosis. Meetings were scheduled with the nursing staff and with the providers (physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants) to engage them on any new processes and to brainstorm a team approach to the issue. PartnerSHIP 4 Health provided training to staff, including Shippee, around motivational interviewing – a clinical skill that facilitates patient-centered care and patient self-management.

Using the new identification strategy, Perham Health providers discovered that many of their patients had prediabetes, and they wanted to support their patients in heading off diabetes. Having been awarded PartnerSHIP 4 Health SHIP and CWG funds to offer the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), Perham Health had an internal resource for providers to offer patients.

The Results

Fast forward to November 2016, when Shippee was removing stitches from a patient's hip incision. She noted that the patient's A1C diabetes blood test was in the prediabetes range, and, using her newly acquired motivational interviewing skills, mentioned she was concerned about his weight. Shippee recommended that he consider a weight loss plan. He asked her for help, and she referred him to a DPP class at Perham Health.

The patient enrolled in the 12-month program. During an August 2017 clinic visit, Shippee saw that the patient had lost 50 pounds, and his A1C was now in the healthy range. "The clinic-level changes supported my work, and, in turn, the work of the patient," Shippee said. "It is a success story on so many levels."

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