

February 2024

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# Heart Health Matters - Honoring Our Heritage

## IN THIS ISSUE

American Heart Month/Black History Month Observances

Dr. Levy's Corner

Transforming ADPKD treatment: a promising new drug discovered by MIT and Yale researchers

A Heart-Centered Approach: Interconnectedness

PreventionLink in the Community

PreventionLink is Winning



## February...

is an important month as it marks the observance of two significant events - Black History Month and American Heart Month. Both events are interconnected when it comes to heart health. American Heart Month aims to inspire people to adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle, whereas, for Black Americans, it serves as a reminder of the significant disparities they face in cardiovascular health. Unfortunately, Black Americans are more likely to develop heart disease than any other ethnic group. We have an essential role to play in addressing these disparities and improving the cardiovascular health of this community. PreventionLink is dedicated to enhancing heart health by leveraging an array of cutting-edge technologies, as well as fostering a sense of community through robust social support and networks.





# Closing the gap: Reducing disparities in cardiovascular health



As public health professionals, we must address the significant disparities in cardiovascular health faced by communities of color, particularly in Prince George's County. Here are five ways to reduce disparities and improve cardiovascular health in these vulnerable communities.

## 5 Ways to Reduce Disparities and Improve Cardiovascular Health in Communities of Color

- 1. Educate Communities of Color About Heart Health:** Prince George's County has a diverse population, including many African-American and Hispanic/Latino residents. Unfortunately, many individuals in these communities are not well-informed about the risks and symptoms associated with heart disease. Public Health professionals can enhance awareness and knowledge about heart health through community outreach programs, distribution of informational material, and online webinars. Local resources like the Prince George's County Health Department and the [Maryland Area Health Education Center \(MAHEC\) Program](#) are available to support our efforts to eliminate health disparities and strengthen the healthcare workforce.
- 2. Improve Access to Affordable Healthcare:** Many communities of color in Prince George's County lack access to affordable healthcare, leading to [untreated cardiovascular risk factors](#). We can address this issue by collaborating with local healthcare providers and community-based organizations to urge residents to prioritize routine health check-ups irrespective of their financial status. Resources like the [Maryland Health Connection](#) can help with this.
- 3. Encourage Healthy Lifestyle Habits:** Lifestyle changes are instrumental in preventing heart disease. Promoting daily exercise, reducing tobacco use, and maintaining a healthy diet are essential in improving cardiovascular health. Joining forces with community organizations like local gyms and [Prince George's County Parks and Recreation](#) are essential to educate residents and provide them with the knowledge and resources they need for a healthy and active lifestyle.

- 4. Address Systemic Racism and Inequalities:** Systemic racism is a significant factor in the disparities faced by communities of color. We can work with organizations like the [NAACP Prince George's County Branch](#) and [Advocates for Children and Youth](#) to advocate for policies that increase access to affordable healthcare for Prince George's County residents.
- 5. Provide Culturally Competent Medical Care:** Ensuring equal access to medical services for every patient, regardless of race or ethnicity, is essential in healthcare. By increasing the presence of Black and Hispanic/Latino medical professionals in the industry, we can help address this disparity. Organizations like the [Association of Black Cardiologists](#), which is dedicated to preventing and treating cardiovascular disease in minority communities, are valuable resources for connecting medical professionals with people of color in Prince George's County.



Reducing disparities in cardiovascular health begins with us, professionals in the healthcare industry. By educating communities, improving access to affordable healthcare, promoting healthy lifestyle habits, addressing systemic racism and inequalities, and providing culturally competent medical care, we can impact positive change in the health of Prince George's County residents. We all have a role in this pursuit of equity and equality. Let us seize the moment and come together to make a difference.





## Dr. Levy's Corner:

As we enter February, we commemorate American Heart Month and recognize Black History Month. This year, it's essential to reflect on the disproportionate impact heart disease has on the Black community. According to the American Heart Association, [African - Americans are more likely to have high blood pressure](#), a significant risk factor for heart disease and stroke. They are also at greater risk of dying from heart disease compared to Caucasians and other ethnic groups.

As healthcare providers, we serve a critical role in addressing health disparities and working towards preventing and managing heart disease.

We know that lifestyle changes can significantly reduce the risk of developing heart disease and stroke. Yet, incorporating these changes can be challenging for many of our patients and that's where digital interventions come in. Remote patient monitoring, through which patients can monitor and track their blood pressure at home, has proved effective for controlling it. It's an efficient and cost-effective way for patients to manage their health from their homes.

We must recognize the importance of education in empowering patients to make lifestyle changes. Personalized education catered to the patient's needs and delivered in plain language can create a significant difference. Providing ongoing support and encouraging small changes can help patients feel confident and motivated to make long-term changes to improve their heart health.

We must remember that providing tools and education alone is not enough to bring about lasting change. We need a comprehensive program that sets patients up for success. PreventionLink can help develop care plans and workflows and effectively utilize risk stratification through Electronic Health Records. Our program can help your practice implement team-based and top-of-license models of care, small tests of change or [PDSA's \(Plan-Do-Study-Act\)](#), evidence-based guidelines (i.e., [Target BP](#)) initiatives, and change packages (i.e., [Chronic Kidney Diseases Change Package](#)).

We must also recognize that social determinants of health can be a significant barrier for patients to participate and adhere to these programs. That's why the Prince George's Health Department community health workers can work with patients and providers to assess and address these barriers to achieve lasting changes.

Let's use American Heart Month and Black History Month as reminders to focus on preventing and managing heart disease. We can achieve this by utilizing digital interventions such as remote patient monitoring, and education to empower patients to make lifestyle changes that improve their heart health. By working together, we can reduce the burden of heart disease and bring health equity to our communities.



# New Drug Shrinks Kidney Cysts in Mice, with Potential to Treat Autosomal Dominant Polycystic Kidney Disease (ADPKD) in Humans, MIT Researchers Discover

MIT and Yale University School of Medicine researchers discovered a promising [new drug that could treat Autosomal Dominant Polycystic Kidney Disease \(ADPKD\)](#). Currently affecting over 12 million people worldwide, ADPKD typically develops slowly and only impairs kidney function in patients aged 60 or above, requiring them to undergo dialysis or kidney transplants. While the only approved drug for treating ADPKD, tolvaptan, slows the growth of cysts, it can cause liver damage and frequent urination. This new drug could be a breakthrough in ADPKD treatment since it can dramatically shrink kidney cysts in mice without harming healthy kidney cells. The research shows that 11beta-dichloro, a compound originally designed for cancer treatment, induced oxidative stress that targets the vulnerability of cyst cells. "We believe this has the potential to impact the field and provide a different treatment paradigm for this important disease," says Bogdan Fedeles, lead author and MIT scientist.

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# A Heart-Centered Approach: Interconnectedness



Interconnectedness is a fundamental aspect of the human experience. It has been shown in countless studies that [people who feel connected to others, particularly in their workplace, are more productive](#), more satisfied with their jobs, and less likely to leave. This concept is just as relevant in healthcare as in any other industry.

In medical offices, it is imperative to have a sense of interconnectedness among employees. A medical office is not just a group of individuals working in the same space; it is a team working together to ensure patients' highest quality of care. When the team is connected, they are likelier to have a [shared vision and work towards a common goal](#). They are more willing to collaborate and share information, leading to better communication and, ultimately, better patient outcomes.

Studies have demonstrated [that team-based care](#) can enhance patient satisfaction, improve health outcomes, and reduce healthcare costs. According to research conducted by [the National Library of Medicine](#), interprofessional team collaboration has resulted in improved care quality and a decrease in medical errors in primary care settings.

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## ***What Can Be Done to Foster a Sense of Interconnectedness in Healthcare Workplaces, Particularly in Physician Medical Offices?***

**Some ideas include:**

1. Encouraging social events outside of the work environment.
2. Regular team meetings to discuss care plans and other relevant issues.
3. Training staff in communication techniques and conflict resolution.
4. Celebrating successes together, both big and small.
5. Fostering a culture of trust and respect.

A workplace where employees feel connected promotes a sense of belonging, increasing motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. These benefits are invaluable in any industry. However, they are vital in healthcare, where patients rely on teams of professionals working together to provide them with the best care possible.

Creating interconnectedness is essential to ensuring high-quality patient care, increased employee job satisfaction, and a productive and thriving healthcare environment.







# ...in the Community

PreventionLink recently collaborated with [The Mel Johnson International](#) at the Storehouse for a remarkable outreach event. As a proud member of the PreventionLink umbrella hub, Mel Johnson International will launch its first session of the Diabetes Prevention Program in the upcoming week.

The event was a huge success, as PreventionLink engaged with the community, raised awareness about diabetes prevention, and offered valuable insight into the program's benefits. The Storehouse, a prominent food bank in the area, provided the perfect venue for this meaningful gathering, highlighting the importance of healthy eating habits and active lifestyles.

PreventionLink's goal is to inspire and educate people about diabetes prevention. The program emphasizes healthy lifestyle modifications, positive behavior change, and early detection of diabetes to halt progression, reduce complications, and improve overall health outcomes.

Mel Johnson International's collaboration with PreventionLink is a testament to our shared mission of driving positive health outcomes and building strong, healthy communities. We are thrilled to see Mel Johnson International launch the diabetes prevention program and look forward to working collaboratively toward a healthier future.



Learn more about The Mel Johnson International and PreventionLink's Diabetes Prevention Program by visiting <https://themeljohnson.org/>.

# Transforming Healthcare, One Patient at a Time

## PreventionLink is Winning

The Prince George's County Health Department (PGCHD) has been recognized for its outstanding work in improving healthcare outcomes for patients with chronic diseases through its innovative technology-based program, PreventionLink. The program has been named second runner-up in the [Health Quality Innovator of the Year Award](#).

PreventionLink provides personalized communication and messaging, telehealth technology, clinical systems, medication therapy management, and remote patient monitoring to enhance enrollment in lifestyle change programs for Type 2 diabetes prevention. The program reached over 24,000 residents, with 54% of eligible participants enrolled in various programs.

PGCHD's recognition as the second runner-up in the Health Quality Innovator of the Year award validates the team's hard work and dedication to enhancing healthcare outcomes. It demonstrates the positive effects of preventive measures. PreventionLink has been instrumental in improving health outcomes for residents in Southern Maryland.



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