

Southwest

Rural Health Research Center

Policy Brief: Chronic Disease Management in Rural Areas

May 2004

The Southwest Rural Health Research Center, under a cooperative agreement with the federal Office of Rural Health (ORHP) is now in its third year of research on chronic disease management (CDM) efforts of healthcare systems serving large rural and underserved areas in the United States.

Findings. The research team conducted on-site interviews and surveyed leaders, providers and case managers from six CDM programs across the US. Based on this data, the following key findings are summarized:

- 95% of respondents indicated that diabetes DM was important to patient health care, while 88% regard CHF DM to be important to patient care;
- Other DM programs rated highly important to patient care were COPD (73%), Asthma (70%), and depression (55%);
- 85% of respondents indicated that CDM benefits health plan quality and 82% responded that CDM contributes to patients' quality of care;
- CDM contributes to professional efficiency and efficient use of professional resources (80%);
- Other key findings: DM contributes to patient satisfaction (89%); CDM contributes to patient needs and treatments (over 80%), and over 90% believe that CDM benefits patients;
- Clinical outcomes: Lowered hemoglobin A1c, lower LDL level, reduced blood pressure and improved urine microalbumin screens; and,
- Financial outcomes: 30% reduction in hospital inpatient stays and 17% savings in health plan per member per month expenditures.

Report Name:

Bolin, J., Gamm, L., Zuniga, M., Berger, E. and Kash, B. (Nov 2003). *Chronic Disease Management in Rural and Underserved Areas: Patient Response and Outcomes*. College Station, Texas: Southwest Rural Health Research Center, SRPH, TAMUSHSC.

Chronic Illness Model

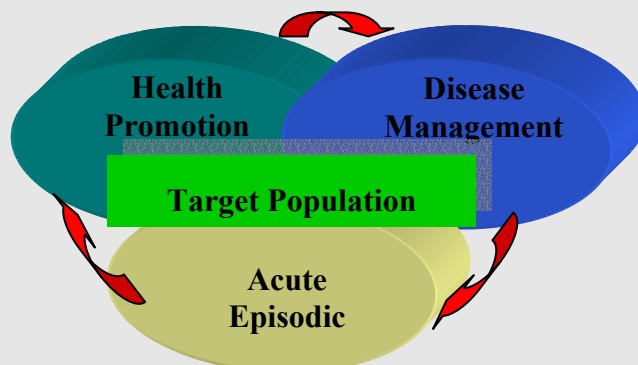


Figure used with permission of Donna Zazworsky

What is CDM?

The foundational core and guiding principle of chronic disease management (CDM) is the prevention and early treatment of chronic diseases through early and focused attention on patients who have symptoms or early tendencies toward chronic conditions such as congestive heart failure, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease through application of the chronic disease model.

Benefits of CDM.

- Potential for improvement in the overall health of individuals with many chronic diseases.
- Reduces overall costs of healthcare by minimizing occurrence of acute events and slowing disease progression.

Rural Barriers to Care for Chronic Illness.

- Only 10% of physicians practice in rural areas
- Scarcity of minority healthcare providers
- Residents less likely to have a regular PCP

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