



Collaborating for a healthy community

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**REGIONAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE LINKED TO \$40 MILLION IN SAVINGS IN NORTHEAST OHIO BY IMPROVING PRIMARY CARE FOR COMMON CHRONIC CONDITIONS, *HEALTH AFFAIRS* STUDY SHOWS**

Collaborating to improve care and outcomes for patients averted more hospitalizations in Cuyahoga County, OH, than Ohio's other top populous counties over six years

**Cleveland, OH, February 5, 2018** – Better Health Partnership (BHP), a collaboration of primary care providers and other stakeholders, is linked to nearly \$40 million in savings over six years by delivering better care to primary care patients with diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart failure, avoiding costly hospitalizations, a study published in February issue of *Health Affairs* found. The study estimates that nearly 6,000 more hospitalizations for so-called ambulatory-care sensitive conditions would have occurred from 2009 through 2014 had trends in Cuyahoga County been similar to other large Ohio counties.

The study credits the role of BHP as an “integrator” that pursues the Triple Aim of improved quality of care, improved health of populations and lower *per capita* costs of care with a suite of integrated activities and programs.

“This study highlights how regional collaboration among health care competitors can improve population health and benefit health care purchasers and payers,” said Donald M. Berwick, MD, MPP, founder of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and former administrator of the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. “Better Health Partnership offers an excellent model for other communities to adopt.”

Researchers at the Case Western Reserve University-MetroHealth System Center for Health Care Research and Policy conducted the study, which was funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of National Institutes of Health. Joseph “JT” Tanenbaum, an MD-PhD student at CWRU, is lead author of the study.

The Cleveland-based regional healthcare improvement collaboration and its partners across Northeast Ohio are dedicated to improving health of populations, reducing disparities and lowering costs of care. Cuyahoga County, the subject of the study, includes competing health systems throughout the region in addition to

safety-net community health centers and public health, academic and business leaders dedicated to a healthy community and vibrant economy.

The *Health Affairs* study centers on the impact of the collaborative's data-driven, "positive deviance" approach and a complementary suite of programs to reduce rates of preventable hospitalizations and associated costs among patients with chronic cardiovascular diseases. Clinical partners' data from electronic health records are used to identify and disseminate best practices, while twice yearly public reports, practice consultation, and more intensive problem-specific coaching inform and support improvements.

"For 11 years, Better Health has routinely documented that collaboration amid competition is possible and productive," said Rita Horwitz, RN, president and CEO of Better Health. "Common chronic diseases disproportionately affect disadvantaged populations and consume resources that otherwise might support investments in education, housing, public health and other community needs. The study highlights the power of our partnership to make a measurable difference in health care quality, population health and health care costs in Northeast Ohio."

The study's findings are based on rates of hospitalizations that could have been avoided with quality primary care for patients with diabetes, high blood pressure, heart failure and pneumonia vaccinations. Tanenbaum and his colleagues at the Center for Health Care Research and Policy compare differences in hospitalization rates for these conditions in Cuyahoga County to five other large Ohio counties, both before (2003 – 2008) and after (2009-2014) Better Health's programs and activities were established.

In the pre-Better Health era, hospitalizations for the conditions followed similar declines across all six counties. But from 2009 to 2011, hospitalization rates in Cuyahoga County fell by 106 per 100,000 admissions more than the other counties and by another 91 per 100,000 from 2012 to 2014.

Estimated savings for averted hospitalizations for congestive heart failure were \$20.2 million; \$9.2 million for diabetes-related conditions; \$8.7 million for pneumonia by increasing vaccination rates, and \$4.4 million for high blood pressure. Altogether, the study estimates that the 5,764 hospitalizations that were averted from 2009 to 2014 avoided \$39.7 million in costs.

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