

The Intersection of Oral Health and Hypertension

Blood Pressure Pilot Project Results, Year 4
September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2022



Background

In North Dakota, nearly 1 in 3 (31.1%) adults are diagnosed with hypertension.¹

Hypertension, or high blood pressure (BP), increases the risk of heart disease and stroke if left uncontrolled. Sometimes known as the “silent killer,” it often has no symptoms and requires screening to detect it.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funding allows the North Dakota Oral Health Program (ND OHP) to support blood pressure screening and referral processes through partnerships with dental providers. Participating dental offices receive training on blood pressure measurement, then screen patients for high blood pressure and refer people with a high reading to medical providers. Dental providers follow up on referrals to determine if the patient sought care and received a diagnosis. The ND OHP’s goal is to increase detection and treatment of high blood pressure in order to prevent complications of this disease. The Blood Pressure Pilot Project began in September 2018 and will continue through August 2024.



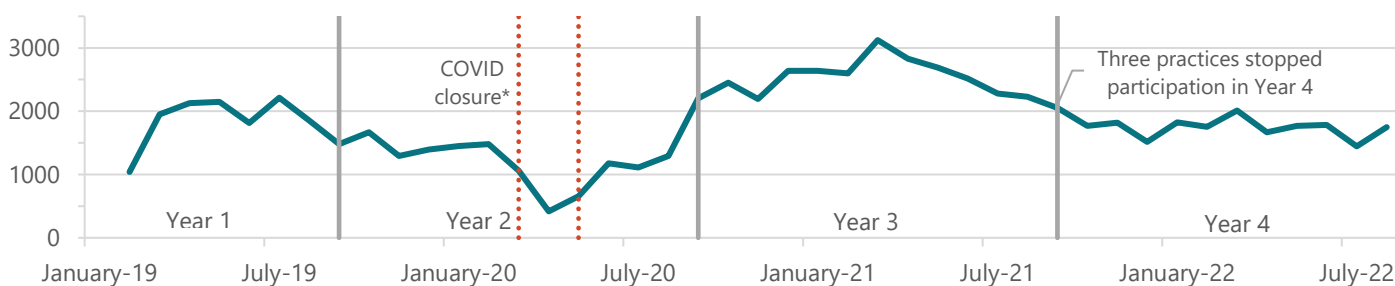
Year 4 Progress

In Year 4, there were 11 dental offices participating in the project. This was three fewer offices than in Year 3 due to the offices’ lack of capacity to maintain data collection. Nonetheless, these offices planned to continue BP screenings.

Participating dental offices have established processes for blood pressure screening and have needed minimal ongoing support. However, referral and follow-up processes have been ongoing challenges for some offices. These offices may not have had pre-existing referral processes in place. Also, many patients are aware of their high blood pressure, and dental providers are less likely to make referrals in these cases. For repeat patients, dental providers may be reluctant to make multiple referrals for the same individual.

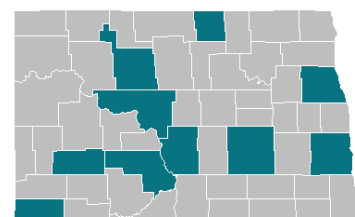
In Year 4, a partner pharmacy joined the project, and the ND OHP ran a media campaign. See the next page for details.

Blood pressure screenings at partner dental offices by month.



*From 3/20/2020 to 5/5/2020, dental offices were closed to non-emergency services.

Year 4 Dental Partner Locations



Year 4 Totals

21,165 screenings

High BP readings

2,842

Referrals

283

Referral & follow-up

117



Pharmacy Pilot

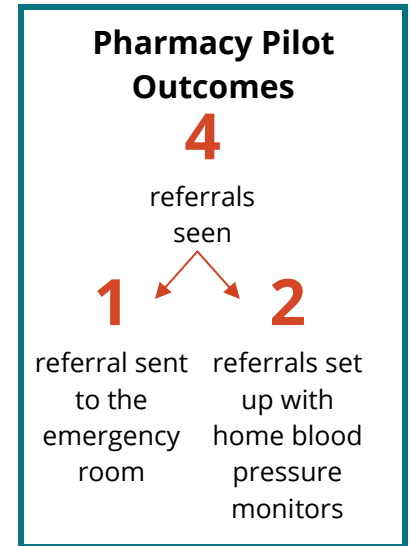
In Year 4, the ND OHP supported a relationship between a nonprofit dental office and a pharmacy located within walking distance of the office.

Purpose: The ND OHP attempted to improve referral processes and patient follow-through on blood pressure referrals. Dental providers have observed that many patients do not follow through on blood pressure referrals.

What happened: The ND OHP identified a pharmacy that agreed to receive blood pressure referrals from a partner dental office. These sites were located within walking distance of each other. The dental office added the pharmacy to its list of referral options when a patient's blood pressure was high. With each referral, patients were encouraged to go to the pharmacy immediately following their dental appointment for a second blood pressure reading.

Results: Throughout Year 4, the pharmacy saw four referrals, one of which was sent to the emergency department for immediate treatment. The pharmacy reports that all four referrals had very high blood pressure and two patients were set up with home monitors. Patients were referred to primary care settings as needed.

What it means: While the number of referrals seen at the pharmacy was very low, the work appears to have a minimal added burden and a potentially life-saving impact. Despite the low volume, pharmacies may be an important option for blood pressure referrals.



Blood Pressure Media Campaign

The ND OHP contracted with a media vendor to produce videos for digital and television media campaigns during Year 4. The campaign's purpose was to raise awareness of the role that regular dental checkups can play in maintaining healthy blood pressure levels. The digital campaign ran from July 14, 2022, to Sept. 15, 2022, and the television campaign ran from July 29, 2022, to Oct. 27, 2022. Marketing materials were designed for people aged 30 and over, rural or agriculture-based communities and Native American audiences. The ND OHP identified these groups as being at increased risk of high blood pressure.

Media Campaign Outcomes

476,231 people reached by the digital campaign

74,100 television campaign plays

An image from a campaign video.



Credits

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¹North Dakota Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2021



Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center
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