AMA Foundation boosts hypertension work on Chicago’s West Side

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High BP is an important modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease, which is the leading cause of death on the West Side of Chicago. To expand on the current work of the AMA and American Heart Association (AHA) with West Side United in Chicago to tackle health inequities, the AMA Foundation has donated $100,000 to support health care organizations and their efforts to help patients with hypertension better manage their BP remotely. This AMA Foundation donation included $15,000 from AMA employees who recently contributed in support of its Community Health Programs.

The AMA and AHA are working with West Side United to help close the large life expectancy gap of up to 16 years between the West Side of Chicago and the city’s downtown neighborhoods. Together, the organizations are committed to a long-term goal of working with West Side clinics and patients to lower systolic BP by at least 10 mm Hg or to achieve BP control in patients with hypertension. Learn more about why the AMA is investing in Chicago’s West Side to boost health equity.

“The AMA and our AMA Foundation are committed to optimizing patient care in vulnerable communities across the nation,” said AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD. “This partnership with West Side United is an important step to achieving this goal. These neighborhoods have long been impacted by social, economic, and health inequities, and through our work with local care teams and the patients they serve, we are making strides to improve health outcomes in our own backyard.”

The donation from the AMA Foundation comes at a time when BP control has dropped among American adults. Overall rates of BP control have declined in recent years, particularly for those in vulnerable communities.

It also follows the U.S. surgeon general’s call to action for hypertension control in the U.S, placing it as a national priority.


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Access to validated BP devices

Through their work with three health care organizations on the West Side, the AMA and AHA recently provided 1,000 validated BP measurement devices as well as educational resources for patients with hypertension.

Through use of the Foundation funds, “underserved patients within the West Side community will gain access to BP measurement devices, with the provision of vital equipment and wrap-around support to enable effective hypertension management at home,” said AMA Foundation President Jacqueline Bello, MD, FACP. “The funds will also help facilitate future initiatives such as a community-wide summit that will bring together West Side [health care organizations] and other community organizations to improve BP control.”

Ayesha Jaco, West Side United’s executive director said one of the group’s “goals for community-based hypertension interventions is to equip residents with resources and tools that allow them to successfully manage their care beyond the walls of hospitals and health clinics. Our collaboration with the AMA and AHA expedites our ability to reach this goal.”

Learn more about the AMA’s West Side United investment and the AMA’s work on health equity, which recognizes that systemwide bias and institutionalized racism continue to contribute to inequities across the U.S. health system. The AMA is fighting for greater health equity by identifying and eliminating inequities through advocacy, community leadership and education.

The AMA, AMA Foundation, and AHA also teamed up with a group of national health care organizations and Essence magazine on the “Release the Pressure” campaign to advocate for improved heart health among Black women. Learn more about this national campaign.