Helping patients with prediabetes, one ZIP code at a time

JUN 27, 2022

Sara Berg, MS
Senior News Writer

Patients diagnosed with prediabetes can take action to help prevent progression to type 2 diabetes. But doing so requires making long-term sustainable lifestyle changes and patients can feel overwhelmed or uncertain about how to start. First Mile Care, which is a health platform that is like Uber but for prediabetes, finds ways to deliver timely diabetes prevention in patients' communities to make changes that stick.

“There’s a problem, for some people, where they shop within a mile of their home. It isn't the best store for good food, but that's where you shop because it's your time available. And so, you shop close to home,” said Karl Ronn, founder and CEO of First Mile Care, a spinoff of the Silicon Valley-based Health2047 Inc., the wholly-owned innovation subsidiary of the AMA. “We have to enrich that environment.”

“We must show up within that convenient distance of your home. And then we must have programs at times when you can be there. Finally, the program is done in a group so you can learn from each other. Altogether, this need for convenience requires us to activate demand versus waiting for walk-ins,” Ronn said. “You can't have enough people who simultaneously walked in to take diabetes prevention in one ZIP code, coincidentally, all within one month—it's not happening. This leads to our on-demand style solution.”

Learn more about how First Mile Care brings connectivity and convenience to diabetes prevention in different ZIP codes.

Hyperlocal approach

“The National Diabetes Prevention Program needs to be able to reach all 96 million people, which means the scale of the solution has to actually scale to the problem,” said Ronn. And with First Mile Care, the answer is simple: Show up in their ZIP code with people who are from their ZIP code, giving
them advice that’s relevant to where they live.

That is why First Mile Care has expanded from its home base in San Francisco to Houston, with the help of Privia Health, and Detroit, thanks to Henry Ford Health. First Mile is also working to expand in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and recently launched in Syracuse, New York. Privia Health and Henry Ford Health are members of the AMA Health System Program.

As a large health system, Henry Ford has “enough people that what we can actually do is create enough classes in a neighborhood,” Ronn said. “We, of course, run things virtually now, but we still run them at a ZIP code level and you’re still taking it with your neighbors.”

“When a health care system gives us enough people, we’ll activate all their ZIP codes and we’ll activate them neighbor to neighbor, with neighbors teaching neighbors. And we’ll make it hyperlocal in that advice,” Ronn said.

Discover how First Mile Care helped this physician get a leg up on diabetes prevention referral.

Activating patients

The First Mile platform is “an extension of a practice that enhances the patient-physician relationship,” he said. “We can activate that population on the physician or health organization’s behalf to be able to make the offering for diabetes prevention.”

“We see ourselves as a high-touch extension of physicians. We’re trying to build on the patient-physician relationship. That’s the lasting relationship, while we’re the first mile,” said Ronn. “The premise is that the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step and we’re that first mile. We give them the ability to take something that’s actionable and make the difference.”

The AMA’s Diabetes Prevention Guide supports physicians and health care organizations in defining and implementing evidence-based diabetes prevention strategies. This comprehensive and customized approach helps clinical practices and health care organizations identify patients with prediabetes and help prevent type 2 diabetes, including by referring eligible patients to a National Diabetes Prevention Program lifestyle change program based on their individual needs.