



Comanche County
Health Department

For immediate release

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New Project to Improve Heart Health Oklahoma

Heart disease and stroke are two of the leading causes of death and disability in the U.S., making cardiovascular disease the cause of 1 of every 3 deaths. More than 9,000 Oklahomans die each year from heart disease, or about 25 deaths per day. While heart disease is the number one killer of Oklahomans, it also takes an economic toll, resulting in nearly \$2 billion dollars in hospital charges in the state annually. The good news is that many deaths from heart disease and stroke can be prevented with simple, low-cost care.

The Oklahoma Heartland Project, a new public-private initiative, is working to reduce heart attacks and stroke according to Brandie O'Connor, regional director for the Comanche County Health Department. Public health personnel have joined with the health care community – including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and hospitals to help patients reduce their risk for heart disease and stroke and live a longer, healthier life. Currently Heartland OK is available in only 12 counties in Oklahoma (Atoka, Carter, Comanche, Coal, Latimer, Le Flore, Lincoln, McCurtain, McIntosh, Pittsburg, Seminole, and Sequoyah). Heartland OK is funded through a grant from the Centers for Diseases Control and is a component of Million Hearts, a national initiative with an ambitious goal to prevention 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017.

“We are excited about this project and believe that by pooling the resources and efforts of public health and clinical care, we can truly make a difference in helping persons in the Oklahoma Heartland Project area reduce their risk for heart disease and stroke. My hope is to expand this program into Caddo, Kiowa and Cotton counties, once we have the opportunity to meet with local providers,” said O'Connor, regional director for the Comanche County Health Department.

A coordinated care team located in the county health department is now working with health care providers to assist them in helping referred patients control blood pressure and manage cholesterol, seek smoking cessation resources, learn heart-healthy habits, and connect to community based resources for help in managing their blood pressure and cholesterol. This health department team offers free blood pressure checks, tracks blood pressure readings, and works with a pharmacist to identify opportunities to increase successful use of medications. Patients who smoke are offered local cessation resources and are referred to the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline (1-800-QUIT NOW). Counseling is available on making healthy diet choices and tips to increase physical activity.

The public health teams will collaborate with the health care community to encourage targeted patients to focus on the “ABCS” that can help prevent heart attacks and

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strokes: aspirin for people at risk, blood pressure control, cholesterol management, and smoking cessation.

Patients must be between the ages of 18 and 85 years, newly diagnosed and placed on medications or previously diagnosed and placed on medications but not controlled, or have other issues that have interfered in care management.

“It is fitting that we highlight this project during February, which is *Heart Health Month*,” said O’Connor. “We feel this project will be an important first step on the journey to better heart health for those we serve in Oklahoma.”

For more information about the project, contact Sarah Whittington at the Comanche County Health Department at (580) 585-6658.

