



# CHAMPIONING FOR HYPERTENSION CONTROL AT THE DATA- AND TEAM-DRIVEN THUNDERMIST HEALTH CENTER

THUNDERMIST HEALTH CENTER

## Million Hearts® in Action

[ Strategies for Achieving Million Hearts® Goals ]



From the front desk staff to the medical assistants, pharmacists and nurse practitioners, everyone at Thundermist Health Center plays a key role in keeping hypertension patients healthy and their condition well-managed. That team-based approach has helped keep blood pressure under control for more than 70 percent of the patients at the Rhode Island facility, earning the center recognition as a Million Hearts® Hypertension Control Champion. The data-driven Thundermist leverages technology and health care informatics into its daily work with patients. But staff also rely on simple tools – such as Velcro hearts that are green on one side, red on the other to remind staff which patients may need an additional blood pressure reading – to help stay on top of patient care in the most effective way possible.



**Sometimes, the data is overwhelming. Some people think it's overkill, but it can be really hard to make improvements without getting specific information and then try to figure out and look for patterns.”**

– Dr. David Bourassa, *Thundermist's chief medical officer*

### [ Fast Facts<sup>1</sup> ]

- People with high blood pressure are at elevated risk for heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of death in the United States.
- About 85 million American adults age 20 or older have high blood pressure; slightly more women than men have the condition.
- About 84 percent of U.S. adults with blood pressure are aware of their condition and about 55 percent have it under control.



<sup>1</sup>Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics—2017 Update A Report From the American Heart Association:

<http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/circulationaha/early/2017/01/25/CIR.0000000000000485.full.pdf>

and Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics 2017 At-a-Glance: [https://www.heart.org/idc/groups/ahamah-public/@wcm/@sop/@smd/documents/downloadable/ucm\\_491265.pdf](https://www.heart.org/idc/groups/ahamah-public/@wcm/@sop/@smd/documents/downloadable/ucm_491265.pdf)

## [ What We Did ]

- At each Thundermist facility, the medical leadership team meets every other week to go over patient data and discuss potential areas of improvement in workflow process and quality.
- The site's medical director, nursing administrator, practice manager and lead medical assistant meet to assess patient care and exchange information between the team and an agency-wide health informatics group that has compiled data analytic reports on patients.
- Medical assistants and doctors alike receive personalized data for each patient and evaluate the improvements or declines that have developed since the person's last visit to the health center.

## [ What We Accomplished<sup>2</sup> ]

- Thundermist Health Center improved the number of hypertensive patients with controlled blood pressure by more than 5 percent between 2014 and 2015.
- Thanks to these efforts, nearly 300 more hypertensive patients of Thundermist now live with well-controlled blood pressure.
- In 2015, Million Hearts® recognized Thundermist as one of 18 "Hypertension Control Champions" because its evidence-based strategy helped achieve blood pressure control rates of at least 70 percent.
- Thundermist's work has led to partnerships with The Rhode Island Chronic Care Collaborative and other area health agencies also dedicated to improving hypertension control, among additional chronic health issues.

## [ What We Learned ]

- Using collective data has helped make it easier for Thundermist physicians and staff to determine which patients have fallen out of compliance with their hypertension treatment. This allows for quick collaboration with site pharmacists about current medications patients are taking, and ones that may be needed to put them back on track.
- While data has helped highlight patients who have fallen out of compliance with treatment, the numbers don't always capture other important patient factors: A change in socioeconomic status can limit a patient's ability to pay for medication or find transportation to keep medical appointments. That's why every team member plays a crucial role, from doctors adjusting medications to medical assistants recording intake notes that reveal changes outside medical offices.



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## [ What We Are Doing Now ]

Thundermist Health Center continues to employ a data-driven, whole-team approach toward improving hypertension control for its patients.

"In addition to encouraging innovation and teamwork, we put a lot of effort into giving teams the data they need to plan each patient's care before the day starts," said Dr. David Bourassa, the center's chief medical officer. "We also provide a weekly all-Thundermist dashboard that helps us to shorten improvement cycles, share best practices and recognize top performers throughout the organization."

<sup>2</sup><http://www.thundermisthealth.org/ContactUs/NewsEvents/ViewArticle/tabid/96/ArticleId/38/Thundermist-Health-Center-Named-2015-Hypertension-Control-Champion.aspx>