

Einstein Cardiac Rehab Center Addresses Patients' Mental Health Needs

Cardiologists at Einstein's Cardiac Rehabilitation Center are now offering screening and monitoring for depression, using a new mental health assessment system that identifies patients in need of help.

July 13, 2010 (FPRC) -- When it comes to recovery from heart disease or a 'cardiac event' such as a heart attack, the impact of depression is as significant as cholesterol levels, high blood pressure or a family history of heart disease. The condition often goes undiagnosed and untreated, and patients who are depressed are less likely to follow their treatment plan or change unhealthy behaviors, jeopardizing their health and well-being.

In an effort to combat this problem, cardiologists at Einstein's Cardiac Rehabilitation Center offer screening and monitoring for depression, using a new mental health assessment system that identifies patients in need of help. The decision to incorporate this tool into its everyday practice, reflects Einstein's commitment to a more holistic approach to patient care -- one that addresses the physical, psychological, and emotional aspects of heart disease.

The implementation of the depression management system, called Polaris-CV (cardiovascular), is the culmination of a two-year clinical trial conducted by Polaris Health Directions, developer of the system, and Einstein clinicians. The study found that patients identified as having serious symptoms of depression were hospitalized seven times more often than patients without significant depression.

"This problem clearly needs attention, but before we can encourage patients to get help, we have to first identify who is depressed or at risk for depression, and that's where the screening tool comes in," says Vincent Figueredo, MD, an Einstein cardiologist and Co-Director of the Cardiac Rehab Center with Debra Braverman, MD.

At the first visit, every patient is asked to complete a brief online questionnaire that will detect depression. Polaris-CV immediately generates a comprehensive report showing the severity of symptoms of depression as Normal, Elevated or High. If results indicate Elevated or High, the cardiologists make a referral for mental health services. The system can also monitor a patient's need for treatment -- "watch and wait" -- or track the progress of those prescribed anti-depressants or attending psychotherapy.

"Depression is also a major risk factor for future heart attacks," says Debra Braverman, MD. "So there's no question that effective intervention and treatment for the condition can greatly improve quality of life for patients."

Einstein's Cardiac Rehabilitation Center, which opened earlier this year on Einstein's Germantown campus, offers individualized treatment programs that include monitored exercise, education and lifestyle counseling to help patients stabilize, slow or reverse the progression of cardiovascular disease.

"Doctors simply don't have enough time to devote to the psychosocial assessment of their cardiac patients," says Tina Harralson, PhD, who was a member of the Einstein site research team during

the clinical trial and is now senior research scientist at Polaris. She currently oversees the implementation at Einstein. "Our system provides an easy way to identify patients in need of help and to track their progress."

One thousand cardiac patients participated in the multi-site, nationwide clinical trial, which was funded jointly by the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute. Einstein played a significant role in the clinical trial and the development of Polaris-CV.

(The clinical trial was supported by Award Number 5 R44 MH060535-05 from the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute, or the National Institutes of Health).

About Albert Einstein Healthcare Network:

Albert Einstein Healthcare Network is a 1,200 bed integrated delivery network with nearly 7,400 employees serving the communities of North Philadelphia and Montgomery County, PA. The network's primary location, Albert Einstein Medical Center, is the largest independent academic medical center in the Delaware Valley providing financing for 400 residents and fellows.

The Einstein network also provides a comprehensive range of healthcare services through the Einstein at Elkins Park hospital campus, MossRehab, Belmont Behavioral Health, Einstein at Germantown, Willowcrest (a center for subacute care), outpatient facilities such as Center One and Einstein Neighborhood Healthcare, and a network of primary care and specialist practices throughout the community. For more information, visit www.einstein.edu or call 1-800-EINSTEIN

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About Polaris Health Directions:

At Polaris, we recognize that organizations cannot manage what they do not measure. Many behavioral health care providers and payers may not be collecting and analyzing enough of the right data to answer basic questions about the cost-effectiveness of the care they offer. Polaris's advanced technology and science driven assessment systems are designed to capture the clinical data essential to quality improvement and enhanced organizational management. Polaris solutions provide advanced analytics to help you improve and demonstrate to your customers the value of your care. With a focus on prediction, Polaris solutions do more than describe clinical change. Our systems also indicate if treatment is likely to have a positive result. Helping you make better decisions in the present by anticipating the future will be the difference in reducing your costs while improving patient care. For more information, contact Polaris at moreinfo@polarishealth.com or visit our website at <http://www.polarishealth.com>. Visit <http://www.polarishealth.com/solutions/CV/cv.html> for more information on Polaris-CV.

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Keywords

[Cardiac Rehabilitation Center](#)
[mental health assessment](#)
[depression management system](#)

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