

# Health center helps manage diabetes in nabes ravaged by the disease

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Morris Heights Health Center (MHHC), one of the oldest and largest Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in NYC, was awarded a grant from the Quest Foundation to improve diabetes-related outcomes in communities that the health center serves throughout the Bronx.

Studies have shown that diabetes disproportionately affects African Americans, Latinos, immigrants, and those living in underserved and low-income communities. Nearly 28% of MHHC's patient population is diagnosed with diabetes.

The grant will support MHHC's continuous efforts to address the increase in uncontrolled diabetes and the rise in diabetic limb amputations in the West Bronx and surrounding areas through their Achieving Diabetes Excellence Program (ADE). The grant will also provide underserved communities with access to proper education and tools needed to successfully manage the disease.

MHHC's ADE program

is a six-week initiative that will be implemented in two cycles, from February-June 2022 and September-December 2022. The program will focus on three main objectives:

- Prevent diabetes-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations.
- Improve self-management to lower blood sugar levels.
- Decrease the number of diabetic lower-limb amputations.

"The West Bronx community has greater prevalence rates of diabetes than most Bronx neighborhoods," expressed Vjolca Hetemi, Health Education Manager at MHHC. "Our aim is to



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reduce uncontrolled diabetes through an innovative program that integrates clinicians and health educators to create lasting behavioral modifications."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), diabetes prevalence rates in the Bronx has risen by 31% over the past 8 years. Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, heart disease, blindness, and limb amputations. When not properly managed, the effects of this disease can be debilitating and sometimes fatal. A 2018 report published by the Health People Community Preventive Health Institute, indicated that diabetes-related lower limb amputations

in the Bronx are 38.3 per 100,000 population, leading all NYC boroughs and 79% higher than the New York statewide rate of 21.4.

MHHC initially began offering a diabetes management program in 2010, with an 8-week initiative called Redefining Diabetes or Project Red. Since then, the program has evolved into Achieving Diabetes Excellence. This recent grant awarded by Quest Foundation is the second funding source that MHHC has received for this program.

In 2020, MHHC received a grant from Ponce Bank in response to the rise in diabetes-related outcomes in the Bronx.

Diabetes and the pro-

gression of diabetes-related health outcomes is a silent epidemic. MHHC has been working to improve diabetes prevention and management through the development and sustainability of their diabetes management program. The health center has also been instrumental in raising awareness of this disease and addressing some of the barriers that impact high diabetes rates in underserved communities such as the lack of healthy food options, knowledge of diabetes self-management practices, and the lack of resources available.

To learn more about the work that MHHC is doing to address diabetes management in the Bronx, visit [www.mhhc.org](http://www.mhhc.org)