



INSTITUTE FOR
HEALTHCARE
IMPROVEMENT

T H E C O U R A G E T O A C T O N

W H A T



2 0 0 4 P R O G R E S S R E P O R T

IN BALTIMORE,
THE LIFE EXPECTANCY
OF A BLACK CHILD IS
SEVEN YEARS SHORTER
THAN THAT OF A
WHITE CHILD.

Reducing Disparity in Diabetes Care

CARE SOUTH CAROLINA

With a patient-population that is 69% non-white, CareSouth Carolina takes the issue of equity in health care very seriously. "This is our strong suit," says chief executive officer Ann Lewis. "It is woven into our very culture."

Headquartered in Hartsville, South Carolina, and with six locations, CareSouth provides primary and preventive health care for the 20,000 medically underserved residents of five surrounding counties. The residents of these counties are rated among the highest in the U.S. for diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Remarkably, the average HbA1c for CareSouth diabetes patients is 8.0. The American Diabetes Association says that an HbA1c reading below 8.0 indicates good control.

An IHI IMPACT network member, CareSouth was among the first participants in the Health Disparities Collaborative, run jointly by IHI and the federal Bureau of Primary Health Care, which provides significant funding for CareSouth and other similar clinics throughout the nation.

"When we started the diabetes Collaborative in 1999, we had 50 patients in the registry. Their average HbA1c was over 13," Lewis recalls. Their registry now includes more than 1,250 patients.

"This program has made a remarkable impact on the quality of life of these individuals," says Lewis. "Because the intervention is the same for all patients, we are eliminating health disparities among racial, rural and poverty lines for patients with diabetes. I go to group visits where patients with diabetes are practically in tears with gratitude about how much our new approach to care is helping them."

Presently, says Lewis, 90% of patients participating in the program have documented self-management goals. Data show improvements in everything from foot and eye care for diabetes patients to the mental health status of depression clients. "We offer first-class care for first-class people," says Lewis. "Disparity is not just about outcomes, it's also about how you treat your patients. That's been part of our culture since the very beginning."

