

Population Health *In Practice*

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR POPULATION HEALTH

ECMH Patient Success for Luz Lopez

Luz Lopez is a Cooper veteran. With just under 15 years of service, Luz has worked in various roles, but most recently as a Patient Services Representative for the Division of Infectious Disease in 3 Cooper Plaza. She is responsible for checking patients in and out of their appointments, scheduling future visits, and organizing their medical records. Luz describes herself as a “Jack of all trades” because she does a little bit of everything for the patients she serves.

While maintaining the health and wellness of her patients has always been a top priority, her own health suffered. Luz’s medical conditions surfaced in 1998 when she had a heart attack and shortly thereafter was diagnosed with Diabetes. A heart stent was inserted in her artery to prevent future symptoms and oral medication was prescribed to control her Diabetes. These measures stabilized her health, but the stent eventually



Luz’s Advice for People with Diabetes:
“Change your eating habits and eat lots of veggies. Change in eating is what made a big difference for me. I also keep a log of everything I eat.”

Luz Lopez

expanded and had to be replaced. Around the same time, Luz transitioned to insulin to manage her Diabetes.

Despite these safeguards, Luz was still not healthy. She struggled with medication, diet, exercise, smoked cigarettes, and had a number of Emergency Department admissions for inconsistent insulin use.

Things changed in 2012 when she received an invitation to join the Employee-Centered Home (ECMH), a dedicated primary care practice for employees and dependents with chronic healthcare

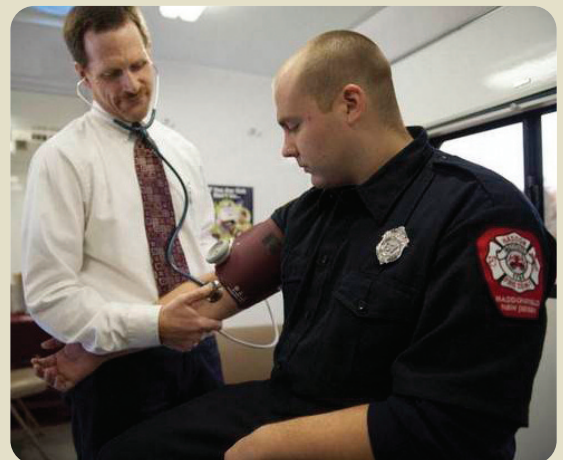
conditions. She was an ideal candidate based on her previous health history and utilization of services.

Luz accepted the invitation, met with the Medical Director, Dr. John Robertson, and has been a patient since. Though she had a primary care doctor prior to joining, there was something different about the ECMH according to Luz. “I got (continued on page 2)

Helping our Heroes – A Partnership to Keep our First Responders Healthy

Contrary to popular belief, firefighters and emergency responders are at a greater risk for chronic health conditions than the risk posed by their often dangerous line of work. In fact, statistics show cardiac deaths are the leading cause of fatalities among all U.S. firefighter in the line of duty at 47 percent. In February, a team from Cooper took steps to reverse those trends by providing preventative cardiovascular health screenings to first responders of the Collingswood Fire Department.

The program, which was created in November 2013 by Camden County Freeholders and Cooper University Health Care, aims to address the cardiovascular health risks of Camden County’s first responders. The partnership was established based upon the recommendation of the Camden County Division of Shared Services and their Fire Equipment Purchasing Advisory (continued on page 2)



ECMH Patient Success for Luz Lopez

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good vibes from him and he was interested in my health,” she said.

A strong doctor-patient relationship is a guiding principle of the ECMH. Luz likes that she sees only one doctor at the ECMH compared to her previous primary care. “Before it was like you see all kinds of doctors,” she said. The ECMH allots 30 minutes for patient visits, compared to traditional 15 minute slots, which affords a comprehensive approach to the visit that would not typically be available in a shorter time frame. “He sits there and he listens,” she added.

Since joining the practice, Luz visits the ECMH every 3 months for routine appointments and regularly attends Diabetes education classes to learn about healthy eating, insulin intake, and weight management. In between visits, she communicates with Dr. Robertson through the MyCooper patient portal and calls the ECMH office frequently.

In addition to Dr. Robertson, Luz has a care team that includes a nurse Population Care Coordinator (PCC), Clinical Practice Assistants, and a Population Health Assistant to support her health care plan. Pauline

Sundell, PCC, makes referrals for appointments, communicates with Specialists, and works closely with Luz to support her in achieving health related goals. Pauline said “It has been a real struggle for her, but she is experiencing success now.” Collectively, the care team strives to provide an environment that fosters wellness. Luz described her relationship with the care team as “beautiful.”

The ECMH team and Diabetes educator work is paying off. Luz has lost 25 pounds and dramatically reduced her A1c blood sugar levels in a matter of months. “In March it was 9.6, but in June it was 7.6, and I hope to get it down to less than 7,” she said. In fact, Dr. Robertson lowered her insulin requirements in response to her accomplishments. “The work Luz is doing is tremendous,” he said. Luz wants to eventually eliminate insulin altogether, and intends to eat right, exercise, and attend Diabetes education classes to achieve her goal.

Her healthy lifestyle choices seem to be contagious. According to Luz, her attitude and approach to working with patients has changed. “When you make changes in your life, your whole outlook changes, and that has made a positive impact on my approach to working with patients,” she said. “I even think I have inspired some patients along the way.”

Medications Can Make You More Sun and Heat Sensitive

A seasonal column from a Population Health Assistant

Sun exposure is more dangerous than you may think, especially if you take certain types of medicine. Before your summer picnic, baseball game, beach day, or daily dog walk, take the time to protect yourself from the sun.

Increased sensitivity to sunlight is a side effect of many used prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Severe sunburns, hives, rashes and increased risk of skin cancer can result. Increased sensitivity to heat, which can lead to dehydration, is also a side effect of many common medications.

Antibiotics, sulfa drugs, cold and allergy medicines and pain killers are among the medications that can make people more vulnerable to sun and heat. A number of medications used to treat acne, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, mental illness and cancer can also cause these side effects.

Steps to take when using these medications include wearing protective clothing, hats,

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Helping Our Heroes - A Partnership to Keep our First Responders Healthy

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Committee (FEPAC). In response, Cooper provides convenient, preventative health screenings and essential health resources to the County’s first responders.

Cooper’s Dan Hyman, MD, Division of General Internal Medicine, Cathy Curley, AVP of Community Health, Sherri Jenkins, RN, and several phlebotomists served twelve Collingswood responders as part of the program. They completed EKG’s, blood work assessments, and physicals. Participants were also given resources for healthy eating, weight management, smoking cessation, educational seminars, and referrals to specialists as an ongoing part of the program.

Cathy Curley said the group has expressed interest in cooking and

learning ways to eat healthier, so bringing in a dietician to teach about diet may be planned in the future. By providing these services at a convenient time and location like the firehouse, barriers that stop responders from participating in preventative care are naturally eliminated. The initiative is not intended to replace pre-employment or annual physicals, which determine fitness for duty.

Screenings started in 2014, and while still relatively new, the program was successful for one long-time firefighter who had a family history of heart disease. He was unaware of his risk at the time, but an EKG identified serious cardiac health issues and deterioration, so he was immediately sent to the hospital for cardiac catheterization and treatment. This firefighter was the definition of a ticking time bomb, but his screening helped address the health issues that put him at risk before it was too late.

Chief of the Collingswood Fire Department, Keith A. Davis Jr. said, “The first responder health assessment program run by Cooper and Camden County has been instrumental in uncovering potential life threatening health conditions in our staff. This program has assisted our staff to become aware of the health dangers we face and work towards being more physically fit and health conscious.”

These exams are the first step in creating an inclusive wellness campaign that will improve the health of firefighters and first responders throughout Camden County. Outreach to other Camden County fire departments for their participation is underway and will target Merchantville Township next.

Helping our Heroes is voluntary and available to all fire agencies and non-profit EMS organizations in the Camden County. To learn more about the program, please email Cathy Curley at curley-catherine@cooperhealth.edu.

Population Care Coordinators: Coming to a Cooper Practice Near You

Imagine taking a road trip without a map or GPS. You might have a general idea of where to go or who to ask for help, but you may also end up feeling lost and wondering if you are in the right direction. You may even experience a sense of being overwhelmed and trying to figure out where to go next.

Healthcare is no different. Many patients feel like they are left to navigate for themselves while on their health and wellness journey. On top of their actual physician visit, they may need to schedule future appointments, check on lab work, and follow-up with Specialists. In the meantime, they may not understand what they need to know, or how to appropriately follow their care plan. But now, thanks to population care coordinators, these burdens are being lifted.

A Population Care Coordinator (PCC) is a trained nurse with the goal of improving health outcomes for at-risk populations by increasing coordination between the patient and their physician. They provide resources, help schedule appointments, and regularly communicate with the patient to ensure their needs are met. This helps alleviate time and resources from the patient, but also their primary care physician to focus on the clinical needs of the patient.

In 2012, Cooper's Center for Population Health piloted the PCC model through its Employee-Centered Medical Home (ECMH) and has since added additional PCC's to work with other Cooper populations. The current PCC team includes Pauline Sundell, RN BSN, Elisa Ristine RN BSN, and Marlana Robinson RN. They may identify patients with complex health conditions that can benefit from additional clinical support by monitoring reports from Emergency Room (ER) visits and inpatient admissions. PCC's also support Cooper

physicians to identify patients with chronic healthcare conditions like Diabetes, who could also benefit from additional care beyond what is provided at an office visit.

Providing patients with a resource like a PCC provides them with support to supplement a traditional doctor's office visit. PCC's can follow-up with a patient after an appointment to reinforce information about their visit, care plan, and overall understanding. They may remind patients about their next office visit and encourage

patients to complete lab work. PCC's are an integral part of the care team and bridge the gap between the patient and the physician.

Pauline serves ECMH patients by regularly communicating with them through a process she describes as "providing follow along services." She advocates for their needs by contacting the care team in an outpatient specialty office to coordinate and facilitate their care. Pauline may also accompany them to their appointments to ensure complete understanding between patient and the physician. She said, "Sometimes there are so many hands on deck that having one person reach out to them really smooths the kinks in the system." The time and attention Pauline affords to her patients does not go unnoticed either. One patient praised Pauline for her assistance and thoughtfulness of her well-being. The patient said Pauline "provides with me information pertaining to my blood tests, and how I should regulate my blood thinning medicine."

Elisa thinks the key to successful population care coordination is meeting the patients where they are, and through their preferred method of communication. "It's about



learning and understanding their needs in order to direct them," she said.

Through her person-centered approach, she successfully served a Diabetic patient that was labelled as "medication seeking" and a "high utilizer" based upon resources they were consuming. Elisa worked with the patient to learn more about their needs and found that all they really wanted were options. The patient was looking for long term preventative solutions, but only the short term solutions were presented because they were the most evident. Elisa reiterated, "It's all about listening to the patient."

Marlana describes her strategy as "tailored and individualized" to support all of the patient's needs. She provides follow-up services and resources to patients with frequent ER visits to prevent future readmission and to reduce costs. Marlana also supports primary care patients diagnosed with chronic healthcare conditions. For example, she helped schedule two appointments and arrange transportation for one patient in an effort to remove access barriers. "Population care coordination is about the total care of the patient," she said.

In the future, Cooper's Center for Population Health will work across the health system to promote the use of care coordinators and demonstrate their value to the organization and to patients served. While the Population Health PCC process is still developing and expanding, one thing is for certain: like a GPS, patients rely on PCC's to navigate their healthcare. For more information on PCC's or to learn how you can utilize their services, please contact **Hilary Ramos** at ramos-hilary@cooperhealth.edu.



Elisa Ristine, RN, BSN, has been a nurse with Cooper for 26 years



Marlana Robinson, RN, has been with Cooper for 22 years. She was an LPN for 6 years before becoming a Registered Nurse.



Pauline Sundell, RN, BSN, has been with Cooper for 32 years. She was a medical technologist for 16 years before becoming a Registered Nurse.

Two Summer Interns Join Population Health

Cooper's Administrative Summer Internship Program returned for a second consecutive year and once again provided students opportunities in Population Health. The goal of the program was to offer a wide range of professional opportunities and learning experiences to students entering the healthcare field. This year, the Center for Population Health welcomed Tierra Wallace, a spring 2015 Health and Exercise Science graduate and Ben Jaffe, a rising junior Economics and Biology major at Muhlenberg College, to their team for the eight week program.



Tierra Wallace



Ben Jaffe

As a recent graduate from Rowan's Health and Exercise Science program, Tierra's studies made her aware of the various determinants impacting one's health and the common barriers to obtaining healthcare. She said, "My goal as an intern at Cooper was to gain a better understanding of how programs are developed and implemented to better assist the community. During that process I wanted to learn about the research aspect, how to obtain funding and how resources are obtained for community members to benefit. I was also interested in learning about the role health insurance plays for those who can afford it as well as alternatives for those who cannot." To accomplish one of her goals, she created community resource guide for low to no-cost health related resources in the region. Her other projects included researching grant opportunities and providing outreach to patients in need of follow-up phone calls for preventative care.

Ben entered the internship wanting to learn about the "business side of medicine." His previous work experiences exposed him to healthcare legislation through research and meetings wherein business and medical challenges were discussed. At Cooper, his projects included a mixture of different

projects and exposure to different population health strategies. Ben was instrumental in creating Entity Relationship Diagrams to show the connection between different groups of payor data, a foundational step for analyzing populations of patients and determining appropriate methods for outreach. He was also responsible for collecting and documenting information for the Patient-Centered Medical Home recognition project by documenting current practices and procedures taking place in Cooper Primary Care. For the Employee-Centered Medical Home, Ben created an interactive presentation to

highlight the accomplishments that took place over the past calendar year. "This internship provides me insight into the business side of medicine and allows me to incorporate my business interest to create efficiencies in the medical profession."

Part of their schedule also included Friday afternoon lunchtime learning opportunities with the other Administrative summer interns. They spent time with members of the Cooper executive leadership team like Dr. Anthony Mazzarelli, Senior Executive Vice President, Chief Physician Executive and Chief Medical Officer and Louis Bezich, Senior Vice President of Strategic Alliances, and others to ask questions and learn about their experience in healthcare. One Friday was spent at a Town Hall Meeting in Voorhees to hear about organizational updates and health system progress from Cooper President and CEO, Dr. Adrienne Kirby.

The end of the internship program was celebrated by a final presentation and luncheon to highlight the projects each intern worked on throughout the summer. Tierra presented her community resource guide, while Ben showcased some of the

databases, PCMH documentation, and ECMH Prezi presentation that he created.

Tierra is still interested in health education and health promotion and is considering going back to school to become a nurse. Her ultimate goal is to be a health care professional that can "bridge the gap" in the health care field with various types of education for those who need it the most.

Though Ben is a returning to Muhlenberg to continue his undergraduate career, he thought the program provided new insights into medicine and allowed him to incorporate his business interests. In the future, Ben would like to pursue medical school or an MBA, and explore a variety of different careers in healthcare. "I want to make an impact on the health field," he said.

Medications Can Make You More Sun and Heat Sensitive

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sunglasses and sunscreen. Advances in apparel design now include SPF in some clothing items. Limiting sun exposure throughout the day and drinking cool water on a regular schedule will also help to keep your body hydrated.

If you have a job that requires you to be outdoors or to engage in strenuous activity, ask your doctor about the possibility of adjusting the dosage or timing to minimize interference with your work responsibilities.

As with all medication, the more you know about it, the better. Read labels and drug insert packets. Bring your questions to your pharmacist or ask your health care provider. When you understand the situations and circumstances that increase the likelihood of a medication reaction, you will be able to take precautions to minimize the risk.

— Anne Rudolph,
Population Health Assistant

Other departments offering internship opportunities included the Neurological Institute, Ambulatory Operations, Accounting, Finance, MD Anderson, Human Resources, Surgery Center, Healthcare Access, Strategic Planning, Physicians, and Care Management.