The Community Health Worker and Asthma – It Does Work

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The Asthma Care Clinic is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the state of Pennsylvania. The available housing for families is over 75 years old. The local public schools are in disrepair. Food insecurities are rampant. Paying utility bills is difficult. Add all of these issues to the family of a child with asthma and what is left out – asthma care.

The Asthma Care Clinic is run by a multidisciplinary team – health care provider, community health workers, social work, lawyer and public health interns.

The most important member of the team is the community health worker. The clinic has two community health workers. With the introduction of the CHW’s to the Asthma Care Clinic we have seen many improvements in the life of the child with asthma and the families’ lives.

The CHW meets with the family and child in clinic or during hospitalization. They are the face of the clinic. The CHW’s are from the neighborhoods that are served by the Asthma Care Clinic. The CHW’s focus on the child with asthma and assist the families with many other issues. The issues could be food related, housing related, school related, legal related or mental health related.

Because of the work the CHW’s are doing with the families we are seeing the families working to manage their child’s asthma. We see families improving their lives and the lives of their children.

The most recent data has shown the following: for one Medicaid MCO there was a savings of 12,000 dollars per child who was touched by the CHW. The other Medicaid MCO showed a 75% decrease in hospitalizations and ED visits of children/families who had been touched by the CHW.

We must continue this work and share with the medical community the importance of community health workers.