

Banner Network Colorado unveils new diabetes outreach program to improve patient health and medical cost

GREELEY, CO, July 19, 2016 – With the roll out of a new diabetic outreach program by the end of the year, Banner Network Colorado (BNC) aims to vastly improve the outcomes of one of the most chronic, yet undertreated diseases. The new program will focus on engaging diabetic patients in BNC to get annual exams that detect and treat symptoms early while reducing healthcare costs for both patients and care providers.

“Diabetes is the No. 1 cause of blindness, kidney failure and dialysis, as well as limb amputation in the country,” said Dr. Charles “Scott” Harrod, Medical Director for BNC. “This program encourages diabetic patients to take control of their disease by scheduling routine exams and avoiding costly and painful complications.”

As defined by the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation, diabetes is a metabolic disease affecting the body’s inability to produce insulin, which elevates the level of glucose in the blood. There are two types of diabetes: Type 1, which usually develops in children and teenagers and Type 2 diabetes, which is often tied to lifestyle factors in adults.

According to the American Diabetes Association, diabetes is growing at an epidemic rate in the U.S. with nearly 30 million affected by the disease. Here in Colorado, more than 400,000 people, or 9.8 percent of the population, have diabetes.

Part of BNC’s move to an Accountable Care Organization (ACO) model of care, the diabetes outreach program is one of many initiatives the network is implementing to provide better care with fewer dollars. With this program, administrators are looking to increase participation in annual eye exams, kidney disease tests and blood sugar tests, or A1C. With approximately 15,000 people in Northern Colorado covered by BNC, there are potentially more than 2,200 patients targeted for this program.

Starting this summer, the diabetes outreach program will consist of a three-pronged approach:

1. Call from a student nurse – any patient on record diagnosed with diabetes in BNC will be contacted by a registered nurse and asked if they have had appointments in the last year for an eye exam, kidney disease test and blood sugar test.
2. Mailer – BNC will follow up the phone call later this year with a mailer that provides patients with information on how to manage the disease and schedule appointments. Management tactics include: weight loss, healthy eating, increased physical activity and working with a health professional.
3. Call from healthcare provider – the third and final point of contact will be a phone call from the patient’s healthcare provider to help schedule the appointments.

“In my 35 years of practicing medicine, I’ve seen diabetic numbers and obesity rates triple,” Dr. Harrod explains. “The diabetic community is a chronically underserved population, but we have the ability to make significant improvements by focusing on wellness instead of just illness.”

Annual eye exams, performed by an ophthalmologist or an optometrist, for example can help with early detection and treatment of the disease as eye doctors can pick up on small vascular changes in the retina even before the patient is experiencing negative symptoms from high blood sugars.

Additionally, the program has the potential to save diabetic patients from costly medical bills. As reported by the American Diabetes Association, people with diabetes on average have medical expenses nearly three times higher than those without diabetes making the prevention and management important from both a health and financial perspective.

About Banner Network Colorado

Banner Network Colorado (BNC) is a provider network serving health care policyholders in Larimer and Weld counties in northern Colorado’s Front Range. The network is composed of health care providers such as physicians, hospitals and related medical providers who are linked together to improve the quality of care for patients. These providers make a commitment to work closely together to coordinate all aspects of a patient’s care, to enhance the patient experience and to improve outcomes. The network has developed several traditional and value-based arrangements with payers such as Aetna, Cigna, Humana and UnitedHealthcare.

About Banner Health

Headquartered in Phoenix, Banner Health is one of the largest, nonprofit health care systems in the country. The system manages 29 hospitals, including three academic medical centers; provider networks; Banner Medical Group; long-term care centers; outpatient surgery centers and an array of other services including family clinics, home care and hospice services, and a nursing registry. Banner Health is in seven states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nebraska, Nevada and Wyoming.

<http://bannerhealth.mediaroom.com/2016-07-19-Banner-Network-Colorado-unveils-new-diabetes-outreach-program-to-improve-patient-health-and-medical-cost>