

Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



IMPROVING BLOOD PRESSURE IN BLACK VETERANS

INFORMATION BRIEF

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INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans.

HEALTH DISPARITIES

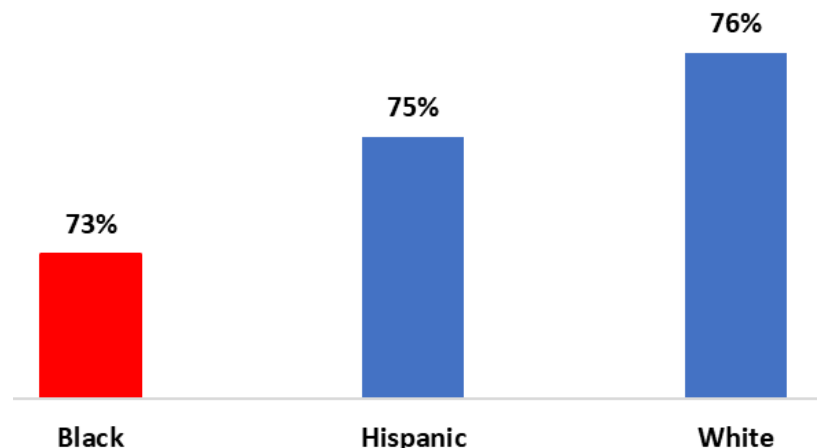
Blood pressure is the pressure of blood pushing against the walls of the body's arteries. Arteries carry blood from the heart to the rest of the body. Blood pressure is measured in mm Hg using two numbers: systolic blood pressure, which measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart squeezes to push blood out to the body and diastolic blood pressure, which measures the pressure in the heart's arteries when heart is relaxed. Systolic blood pressure is always the larger of the two values that comprise someone's blood pressure reading. For example, if the systolic blood pressure is 120 mm Hg and the diastolic blood pressure is 80 mm Hg, the blood pressure reading is 120/80 mmHg.

When blood pressure values are higher than optimal, someone is considered to have high blood pressure, or hypertension. Hypertension increases

the risk of developing heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

There are racial/ethnic differences in the percent of Veterans who have blood pressure within recommended levels. Clinicians at four VA Medical Centers in Texas implemented an intervention to address disparities in blood pressure control in the Veterans receiving care in Texas. Black Veterans have lower rates of blood pressure control than Hispanic or White Veterans across all VA Medical Centers in Texas (VISN 17).

Percent of Veterans with Good Blood Pressure Control in VISN 17, by Race/Ethnicity



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REDUCING DISPARITIES

In VISN 17, MOVE! Coordinators worked to narrow the equity gap among Black Veterans with hypertension to improve their engagement in healthy lifestyle behaviors and disease management skills. Black Veterans whose systolic blood pressure met criteria for being hypertensive were contacted and given the opportunity to participate in this holistic intervention to help them lower their blood pressure to a healthier value. More than 700 Veterans across Texas enrolled in this program and at follow up, 55% of participants achieved a blood pressure reading that was at goal.

The MOVE! Coordinators acted as case managers for participants by providing individualized counseling to help Veterans set achievable healthy goals. They also created a culturally sensitive handout booklet that was customized to address the specific needs of Black Veterans in Texas with high blood pressure. All participants received this book as well as information about the different programs and resources available to them. Participants had the option of enrolling in any or all of the following programs and services:

- MOVE! Program enrollment in either 12-16 week virtual, telephone or in person groups

- Home Telehealth Hypertension program
- Healthy Teaching Kitchen demonstrations
- Individual visits with a Registered Dietitian
- Individualized visits with a Pharmacy Primary Care Clinic Specialists
- Participating in a Whole Health Food and Drink Course and/or receiving Whole Health Coaching.

The Executive Chef at the South Texas VA Medical Center, Carl Conway, is a Black Veteran himself. Working with the Healthy Teaching Kitchen Program Coordinator in South Texas, he created 2 culturally sensitive Health Teaching Kitchen videos that were shared with participants. He also made a vow to lose weight to become healthier himself. His MOVE! Success Story can be found on the [MOVE! Program's website](#). All the videos created for this program can be found below:

- [LIVE! Cooking with a Twist](#)
- [Health Teaching Kitchen Video](#)
- [Chef Conway's Success Video](#).

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/>

For more information about hypertension, visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention's website on [High Blood Pressure](#).