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### February's Focus

February is home to both American Heart Month and Black History Month. To celebrate, we're calling on health professionals to focus on talking with African American patients about their heart health. Why? Because African Americans are disproportionately affected by heart disease and stroke. Currently, African Americans have the highest rate of high blood pressure, the leading cause of heart disease and stroke – of all population groups, and African American men – especially those in the southeastern U.S. – are at the highest risk for heart disease. As a health care professional, you have the power to inspire patients to protect their hearts by supporting lifestyle changes like taking medication as prescribed, eating healthy, getting regular exercise, and quitting smoking. Use the resources shared in this edition of the Million Hearts eMessage Campaign to work with your patients to set realistic, achievable health goals that matter to them.

### Talking with African American Patients about Heart Health Matters For Health Professionals

Most health professionals understand that African Americans are disproportionately affected by heart disease and stroke. Here's why:

- x More than 40 percent of African Americans have high blood pressure, the leading cause of heart disease and stroke
- x Compared to other population groups, African Americans tend to develop high blood pressure earlier in life
- x African Americans are nearly twice as likely as whites to have a stroke – and are more likely to die from stroke.

There are actions patients can take to improve and protect their health. As a health professional, you can help them by talking with them about their risk and working with your patients to create a heart health plan that works for them. Health care providers can make real impact in patients' lives. We've got tools that can help:

- x Use the Million Hearts [My Personal Health Progress](#) guide to work with patients to set realistic, achievable health goals. Set short-term goals that can be achieved in a week or month as well as long-term goals for the year.
- x Encourage your patients to track their blood pressure using a [Blood Pressure Walks Care](#) results with you regularly.
- x Find these and additional free resources that help with high blood pressure clinical practice, quality control, and patient support at <http://millionhearts.hhs.gov/>

## Social Media Messages

### Twitter

Providers #DYK 40% of African Americans have high blood pressure? Talk w/ your patients & progress <http://1.usa.gov/1NtNfm9s>

African American men are at highest risk for #heartdisease. Health care providers should talk w/ pts: <http://1.usa.gov/1KyAOps>

Providers make a difference in patients' lives by supporting simple changes to improve heart health: <http://1.usa.gov/1KyAOps>

Set realistic, achievable heart health <https://1.usa.gov/1KyAOps> #heartmonth #blackhistorymonth

Compared to other groups, African Americans tend to develop high blood pressure earlier in life <http://1.usa.gov/1NtNfm9s>

Providers encourage patients to track their blood pressure & share results with you regularly: <http://1.usa.gov/1NtNfm9>

### Facebook

Happy February! Hearts and love are in the air with Valentine's Day, American Heart Month, and Black History Month. Why do we mention Black History Month along with the well-known "love" and "heart" observances even though the connection may not seem obvious because it provides a poignant reminder to health care providers to talk with African American patients about their heart health. African Americans are disproportionately impacted by heart disease and stroke, and African American men are especially at risk. Talk to your African American patients about their heart health and work with them to set realistic, achievable goals. Get resources [here: http://1.usa.gov/1KyAOps](http://1.usa.gov/1KyAOps)

Health care providers did you know that 40 percent of African Americans have high blood pressure and that African American men especially those in the Southeastern U.S. – are at the highest risk for heart disease. This month, commit to talking with African American patients about their heart disease and stroke risk and help them set realistic, achievable goals. Learn [more: http://1.usa.gov/1KyAOps](http://1.usa.gov/1KyAOps)

If you are a health care provider, be sure to talk with African American patients about their heart health. African Americans are disproportionately impacted by heart disease and stroke, and 40 percent of African Americans have high blood pressure the biggest risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Encourage your patients to track their blood pressure using Blood Pressure Wallet Cards and share results with you regularly <http://1.usa.gov/1NtNfm9>

### Sample Newsletter Article

#### Help Your Patients Commit to Heart Health this February

It's February and hearts and love are in the air as we observe Valentine's Day, American Heart Month, and Black History Month. While Black History Month may not immediately bring love and hearts, it should – it provides a opportune time for health care providers to talk with African American patients about their heart health.

You may know that African Americans are disproportionately affected by heart disease and stroke – but the numbers are quite staggering:

- x More than 40 percent of African Americans have high blood pressure, the leading cause of heart disease and stroke.
- x Compared to other population groups, African Americans tend to develop high blood pressure earlier in life.
- x African Americans are nearly twice as likely as whites to have a stroke – and are more likely to die from stroke.

Health care providers can make a difference by starting the conversation about heart health with African American patients and by supporting lifestyle changes, taking medication as prescribed, eating healthy, getting regular exercise, and quitting smoking. Here are some specific ways you can help:

- x Use the Million Hearts [My Personal Health Progress](#) guide to work with patients to set realistic, achievable health goals. Set short-term goals that can be achieved within a week or month as well as long-term goals for the year.
- x Encourage your patients to track their blood pressure using a [Blood Pressure Walks Care](#) results with you regularly.
- x Find these and additional free resources that help with high blood pressure clinical practice, quality control, and patient support <http://millionhearts.hhs.gov>

Million Hearts® Partner Resources

Million Hearts® Healthy is Strong

<http://millionhearts.hhs.gov/learn/prevent/healthy-is-strong.html>

Million Hearts® My Personal Health Progress