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Cardiology

Self-Monitoring Blood Pressure Programs Improve Health

BY TIFFANI HELBERG

Beny Richter cares for her 92 year-old mother, Ivone Richter. She became increasingly worried when her mother's blood pressure readings were high at two doctor visits at Community Health of South Florida, Inc. The care team gave Richter a self-monitoring blood pressure machine and asked her to take her mom's pressure at home several times a day.

"The nurse told me to how to do it and she gave me the tools, pictures and written instructions," explained Beny Richter. "So, I followed the instructions. It was very, very easy."

Richter is one of more than 160 patients enrolled in two new CHI programs that teach patients with high blood pressure to monitor their own blood pressure at home.

"That's good for the families to do it at home so you can do it when she's relaxed," said Beny Richter. "It's much better."

Turns out for her mother, monitoring at home was a big help.

"I do appreciate that you have given me the opportunity to measure because now we are sure that she has low pressure and not high pressure. So it's good for me to know that she's fine."

The programs, sponsored by the American Heart Association and the Health Foundation of South Florida could go a long way in teaching patients and medical teams about new ways to approach hypertension.

"We don't often know what a patient's blood pressure looks like in the real world," said Dr. St. Anthony Amofah, Chief Medical Officer at CHI. "Giving them a good



Ivone Richter uses a self-monitoring blood pressure machine as part of a new CHI program.

machine and training them to check the blood pressure accurately could really make a difference."

Dr. Amofah recently returned from presenting to cardiologists at the national conference for the American Heart Association. He discussed the significant progress that CHI and its sister health centers have made using pilot programs like this.

The American Heart Association program looks closely at the patient's perception of the tools including: the machines, logs and even the website. The Health Foundation of South Florida program is even broader with technology that lets patients download software into their phone and links the blood pressure machine to the cell. That



Dr. Amofah getting ready to speak at the American Heart Association Convention in California

allows doctors to remotely access patients' home blood pressure readings via the internet.

"This will enable us to respond more quickly to abnormal blood pressure," said Dr. Amofah.

The program provides quality, validated blood pressure machines to patients who are unable to get one. Some insurance plans will cover this and it could help CHI meet its goals for improving blood pressure in its patient population.

Currently 65% of CHI's hypertensive patients have controlled blood pressure. The goal is to increase that number to 80% by the end of 2018.

For more information about CHI, visit www.chisouthfl.org.