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Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Healthy Hearts Program

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Background and Significance: Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. More importantly, such heart diseases can be prevented through knowledge and behavior change. Major risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease include hypertension, hyperlipidemia, diabetes, cigarette smoking, overweight and obesity, and lack of regular physical activity. Evidence suggests that reducing these risk factors is associated with a reduction in the incidence of CVD and associated mortality. However, education and access to health care are essential to reduce such risk factors. Furthermore, many individuals are underserved by the current health care system (the poor, homeless, mentally ill, and some minority groups) and subsequently have limited or no access to risk-reducing interventions.

Objectives: To provide health education on heart diseases to the homeless and needy that can be easily accessed. As a result, increase individuals awareness and knowledge on the risk factors associated with heart disease.

Project: The purpose of this project is to promote positive health behaviors, specifically among underserved populations, that will result in reducing the risk of heart diseases. Key activities include developing a screening tool tailored to target population, developing questionnaires, creating promotional and educational material, and program evaluation.

Public Health Significance: Healthy Heart screening sessions have the potential to create behavior and lifestyle changes among the population for which it is tailored. Prevention and promotion of heart disease can reduce the number of Emergency Department visits related to heart diseases. This is especially relevant when considering the underserved, underinsured, and uninsured.