

# A Million Hearts® Success Story Strategies for Achieving Blood Pressure Control

2013 Hypertension Control Champion  
Nilesh V Patel, M.D.,FRCS(Eng)

## Project Description

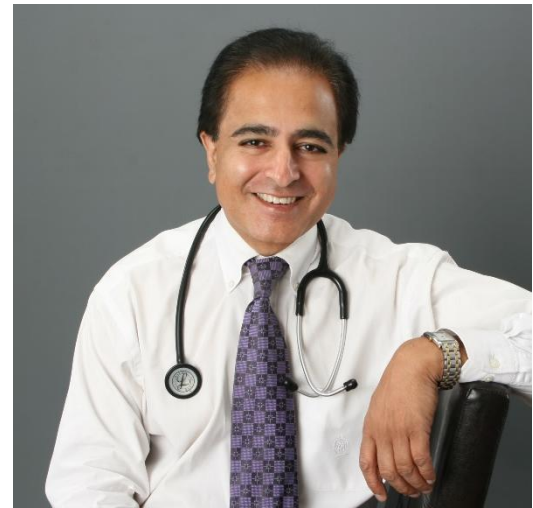
Dr. Nilesh Patel's family practice, Millgrove Medical Center (MMC), has increased its focus on preventive care and wellness over the past few years, striving to help patients—particularly those with chronic conditions like high blood pressure—improve their quality of life and overall health. MMC's motto, "The groundwork of all happiness is health," underpins its recent recognition as a 2013 Million Hearts® Hypertension Control Champion. The practice successfully increased its hypertension control rate from 83.4 percent to 94.8 percent in just one year. Gradual changes, such as the implementation of an electronic medical record system, helped Dr. Patel and his staff at MMC achieve this improvement.

## What We Did

- **Tailoring the electronic medical record system.** After introducing an electronic medical record (EMR) system in 2011, MMC made gradual improvements to support patients, such as using color-coding to mark the records of patients with hypertension. The EMR system now integrates lab results and medication tracking to streamline care. Additionally, patient-specific educational resources are linked with the EMR, making it easier to tailor communication during each patient's visit.
- **Partnering with pharmacists.** Dr. Patel built strong relationships with local pharmacists. This led to partnerships that encouraged open communication; so much so that pharmacists called MMC if a patient missed a prescription refill for their hypertension medication. This team approach helped Dr. Patel address barriers to medication adherence with patients, making them feel more engaged and cared for. When medication cost-related barriers arose, Dr. Patel was able to change prescriptions and identify lower-cost options by working closely with the pharmacies.
- **Empowering patients to measure blood pressure at home.** Dr. Patel encouraged patients with high blood pressure to purchase a blood pressure cuff for home use. After instruction on how to take measurements during an office visit, patients with uncontrolled hypertension checked their blood pressure twice a day, recorded readings, and called in their results regularly for inclusion in their EMR. Every six months, patients brought their blood pressure cuffs into the office for comparison readings.

## What We Accomplished

MMC's dedication and commitment to patient care led to an eleven-percentage-point increase in its hypertension control rate in just one year, helping an additional 48 patients reach their target blood pressure and reduce their risk for heart attack and stroke.



## Dr. Patel's Patient Population

- Serves 3,100 adult patients in eastern Pennsylvania
- 8% have high blood pressure
- Approx. 30% belong to a racial or ethnic minority
- About 6% are Medicaid-eligible

## What We Learned

### Barriers and Challenges

Shifting to a 'Wellness and Preventive' model was an adjustment at first, since patients were used to coming into MMC only when they were sick. Dr. Patel and his team emphasized how high blood pressure affects all parts of the body (like eyesight and kidney health) to help patients see the "big picture" and need for regular visits.

### Success Factors

As a small, single-physician practice, Dr. Patel and his staff at MMC have valuable insight into what makes hypertension control efforts succeed or fail for practices with limited resources. For others focusing on reducing high blood pressure, MMC recommends:

1. Persevering even when systems or processes don't work perfectly the first time. It might take a few tries to get things right, but down the road it will make the work easier.
2. Connecting with external support, like the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT [Regional Extension Center](#) program. Officers in this program can provide help with building and using EMR systems and offer encouragement when it feels overwhelming.
3. Taking advantage of the data provided in EMRs, such as creating visuals that show progress over time to review with patients.

"It's exciting to see patients gain control over their own health. It makes our practice's focus on prevention worthwhile, even when it's challenging." – Nilesh Patel, MD

## What We Are Doing Now

As MMC continues its hypertension control work, they are looking to develop a tool that allows patients to track their blood pressure readings and email them into the practice. They hope this will also facilitate continued patient-provider communication between visits.

## Organization Information

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