Giving Congregations a Tool to Track Health Together

All across New York City, volunteers in congregations and community centers regularly offer blood pressure monitoring– and do their best to help people with high blood pressure adopt healthy routines to lower their risk.

In 2011, The Primary Care Information Project (PCIP), a bureau of the New York City Health Department, met with the leaders of Brooklyn church health ministries to talk about whether health information technology could help them meet their goals. The church leaders told us that:

1. It was too easy to lose track of people with high blood pressure when their readings were stored on paper cards in a file box.

They wanted an easy way to keep track of the congregants with the highest readings!

2. They had no easy way to track health trends in the church community on the whole.

They wanted a simple, secure database that would allow them to set goals and make progress!

In response, PCIP partnered with a leading software vendor to develop the Community Health Dashboard– a secure website. As of the summer of 2013, nine NYC churches are the Dashboard as part of the blood pressure monitoring sessions. Over 300 members have signed up to track their blood pressure readings with these health ministries, and recorded over 500 blood pressure readings.

Here's how the Community Health Dashboard works:

Participant Look-Up:
Health Ministry volunteers can sort the list of participants based on highest BP, allowing for a focus on regular check-ins with these participants.

| Group Averages	135 / 84	123 / 210	135 / 84	No Change
Name ⇕	Last BP ⇕	Ave BP - Last 30 Days ⇕	First BP ⇕	Change in BP ⇕
	145 / 98		145 / 98	No Change
AARON TULL	150 / 74		150 / 74	No Change
ADA CEARLEY	138 / 92		138 / 92	No Change
ADAM SANDLER	111 / 71		111 / 71	No Change
AFTON POOLE	134 / 90		134 / 90	No Change
ALAN CALLAHAN	139 / 72		155 / 83	Much Better

Community Health Dashboards

Progress Chart:

The Health Ministry can review group trends in blood pressure to see if the group has met its goals for improvement. This allows friendly competition between local churches for achieving high participation and health improvements
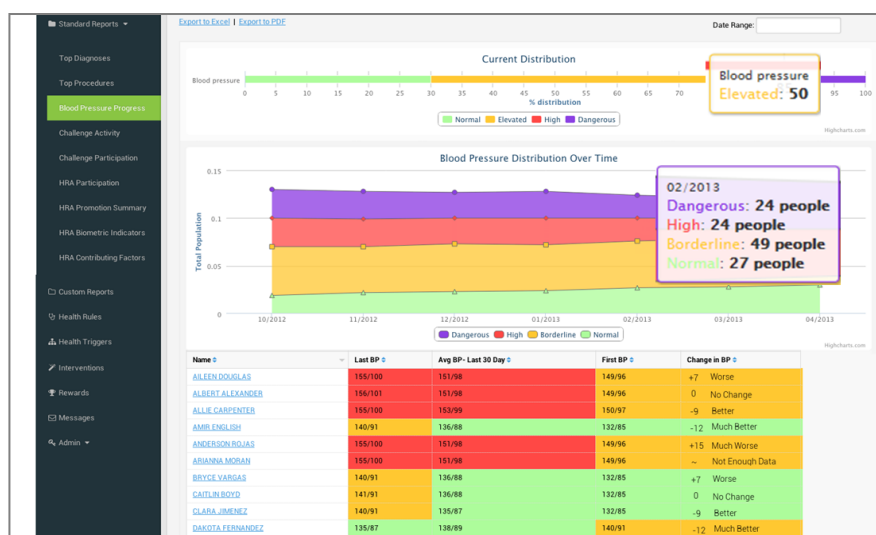
Personal Health Record:

Every participant has access to his/her blood pressure on a secure password-protected website. Here participants can enter additional measurements they take outside of the church and print out a chart of all of their readings to take in to show their physician.
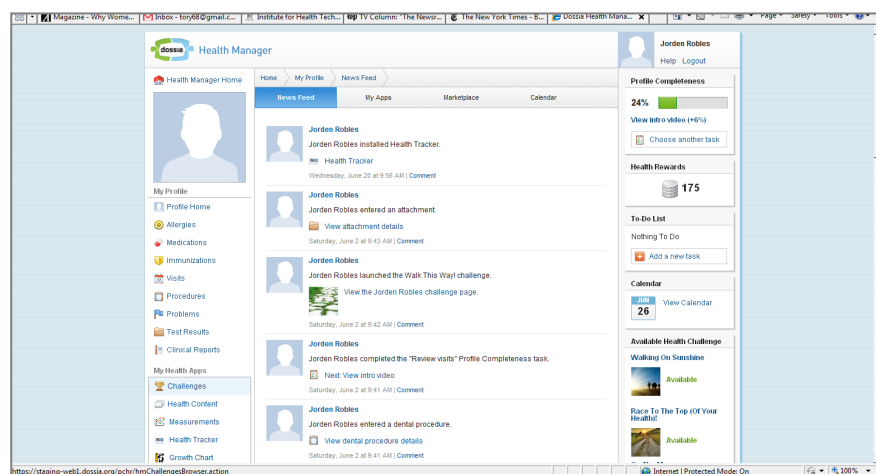
Goal setting:

Once the church community has set goals for identifying and reducing the number of congregants with high blood pressure, progress towards these group goals can be tracked, and regularly featured in the church program and announced during services.

The Mission:

Empower Community to Prevent Hearts Attacks and Strokes: Once the church leadership has set a goal for improving health, the Health Department offers up strategies for meeting these goals (e.g. launching a walking club, promoting a pledge to quit soda or smoking). Over time, with the Dashboard, the church and the Health Department will learn WHAT WORKS in each community, and show the power of community for health.

If you have questions about the Community Health Dashboard, or would like to put this tool to work in your community, contact Thomas Cannell at tcannell@health.nyc.gov

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