“Cardiology Deserts” Campaign Improves Access to Cardiovascular Care

The Association of Black Cardiologists campaign identifies and addresses gaps in cardiovascular services throughout the United States.

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The Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC) launched the “Cardiology Deserts” campaign to address regions of the United States with limited access to cardiovascular services, according to an ABC news release.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) includes stroke, heart attack, heart failure and high blood pressure, or hypertension, among other conditions. CVD is the leading cause of deaths for U.S. adults, but some groups—including those with limited access to care—carry a heavier burden.

Many rural and urban communities throughout the United States face barriers to cardiovascular care due to provider shortages, geographic isolation, limited care or economic challenges.

In fact, an estimated 22 million Americans live in counties with no cardiologist, according to a study published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology. What’s more, these counties have a 31% higher cardiovascular risk index, a greater prevalence of CVD risk factors and a life expectancy one year shorter on average than people living in counties with a cardiologist.

To reach underserved areas and confront these challenges, “Cardiology Deserts” aims to enhance primary provider capabilities, expand access to cholesterol screening, strengthen patient-provider relationships and encourage communities to pursue healthy lifestyles.

“This initiative is more than a campaign—it is a comprehensive intervention,” said ABC president Anthony Fletcher, MD, in the release. “These cardiology desert communities bear the brunt of our nation’s cardiovascular crisis. By strengthening the capabilities of primary care providers and

meeting communities where they are, we aim to shift the trajectory of cardiovascular health for those living in the most overlooked areas—rural or urban—across this country."

Sponsored by biotech company Amgen, the pilot program launches in regions across Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas, where many affected communities are located.

"Barriers to cardiovascular care in the United States remain pervasive and addressing them requires long-term investment and multipronged approaches that unite stakeholders across the CVD landscape," said Paul Burton, MD, PhD, senior vice president and chief medical officer at Amgen. "We look forward to the ways this initiative will meet both patients and health care providers in their communities—delivering better access to resources, education and LDL-C [low-density lipoprotein cholesterol] testing."

Founded in 1974, ABC comprises over 2,000 international health professionals dedicated to eliminating disparities related to cardiovascular disease in all people of color.

"This work is about equity, empowerment, and ensuring that no matter your ZIP code, you have the opportunity to live a healthier life," Fletcher said.

To read more, click #Cardiovascular or #Access to Care. There, you'll see headlines such as "'Take Your Loved One to the Doctor' Centers Black Men in South Florida," "This Test Tells You More About Your Heart Attack Risk" and "Meditation Reduced Heart Disease Risk in Black Adults."

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