

Nuestra Salud – A Support Group for Diabetic Patients

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Introduction

As medical students rotating through Harris County clinics, it became painfully evident how rare it was to find diabetic patients who had good control of their disease. We encountered many frustrated patients that were willing to fight for their health but somehow couldn't change their diets, start an exercise routine, or keep track of their medications and important check-ups. We found that many of them faced socio-economic and linguistic barriers that are difficult to tackle with 15-minute visits to their PCP's every three months.

It was our belief that these patients could significantly improve their disease if given more intensive orientation from healthcare professionals to guide them through the profound lifestyle changes and complex medical treatments that are demanded of them. Our Schweitzer Fellowship project was designed to address this unmet need by providing a unique support group-styled experience that combined education with exercise activities.

Project Format

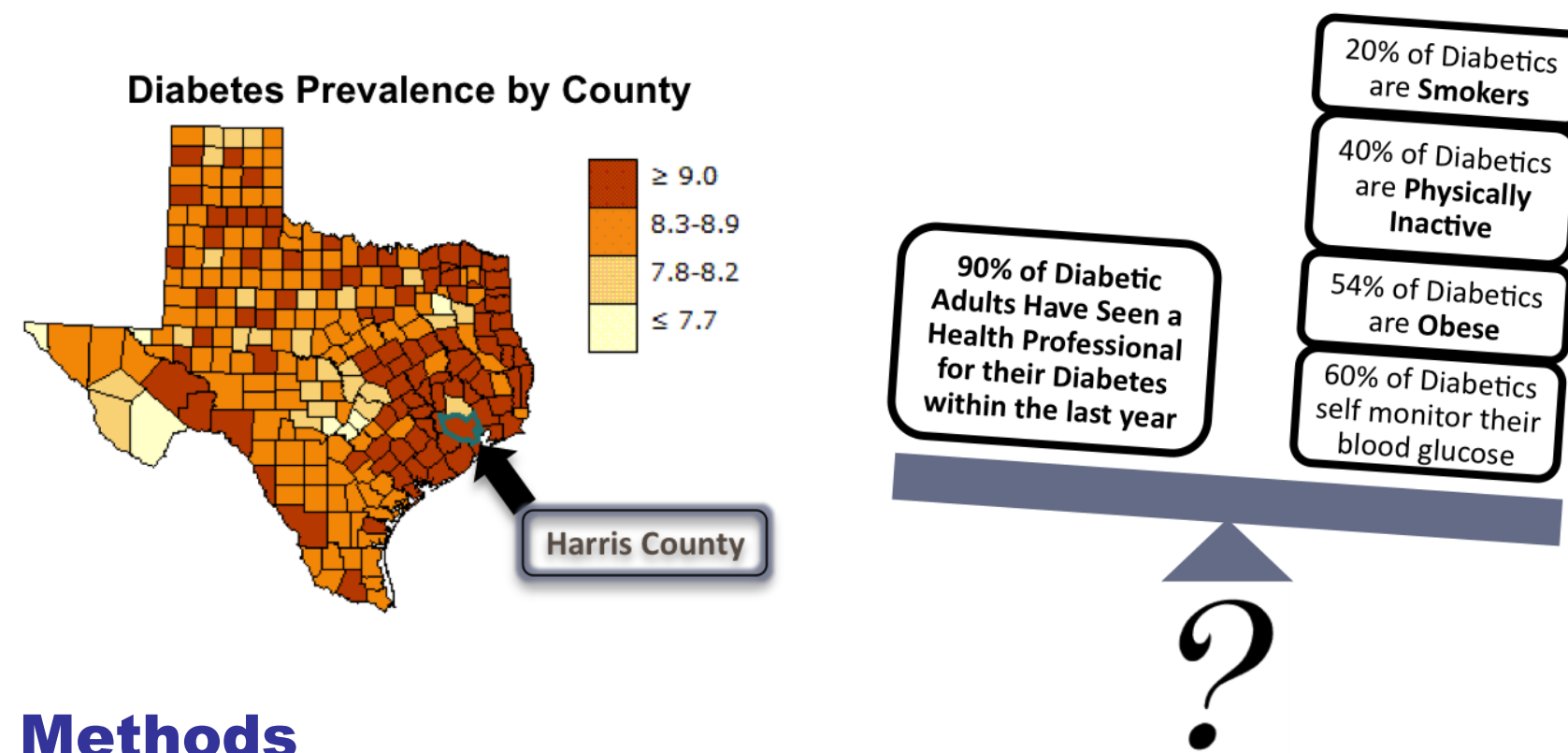
- Class Sessions Held on Saturday Mornings to Accommodate Work Schedules
- Involvement of Patients' Family Members
- Highly Individualized to Address Specific Needs
- Focus on Building Stronger Support Systems
- Culturally Inclusive and Dynamic Teaching Style
- Taught In Spanish to Ensure Complete Understanding
- Modules to Guide Each Step of Lifestyle Modifications



We embraced a holistic approach to our diabetic education classes. We aimed to empower each individual to take control of their disease and feel positive about their new life-course, despite their individual socio-economic hardships.



We employed a variety of visual aids and creative ideas to turn the sessions into an enjoyable and encouraging experience while cementing important medical concepts.



Methods

Our target population was the Gulfgate community in the Southeast side of Houston. To avoid transportation issues, sessions were held at Gulfgate Clinic located at the heart of the community. Likewise, conducting sessions on weekends was a new addition for the clinic, reaching patients that could not attend diabetic education classes during their work week. To begin, we recruited our diabetic patients with one-on-one mini Q&A sessions which allowed us to get to know our cohort of patients and assess their needs. We then invited them to join our support group which included a combination of exercise as well as diabetic education classes.

Saturday Morning Schedule

9:00 am – 10:00 am	Cardio & Strength Exercise Session
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Break and Socializing
10:30 am – 12:00 pm	Diabetic Class Session

Reflections & Outcome

We hope that our project demonstrated what a positive impact continuous and individualized long-term support groups can have on the progression of diabetes. Through these means, we hope to have inspired the Gulfgate Clinic to begin offering this type of dynamic support group on weekends.

Acknowledgements

¡MUCHÍSIMAS GRACIAS a nuestros pacientes por haber dedicado todo su tiempo libre en los fines de semana al largo de nuestras clases! Realmente son una inspiración para nosotras. Somos la familia de la diabetes para siempre. ¡Sigamos luchando adelante para su salud!

Sincerest thanks to Milet Portales, Carolyn LaCour, and Connie for their constant support in this project and for their true passion for service. And to Dr. Holleman and Dr. Gotschall for their invaluable work in this community as physician role-models.

Participants & Activities

Our End-of-Year Celebration was a family picnic with diabetic friendly foods. It was held in Ingrando Park, a local community park, and ~100 children and adults were provided with a high quality meal full of fresh vegetables. We also played many high energy games with the children to promote the fun of exercise within our community. **This picnic meant the world to us, and we will treasure these memories forever.**

“Do something wonderful, people may imitate it.”

Dr. Albert Schweitzer

