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Abbott Northwestern Hospital receives \$6 million from the Robina Foundation for bold experiment in primary care

MINNEAPOLIS 10/22/2008--The Robina Foundation has granted Abbott Northwestern Hospital \$6 million to test a new primary care model. The pilot study will be among 500 patients with diabetes, heart failure and hypertension cared for in an inner-city clinic affiliated with the hospital.

The work is part of Allina Hospitals & Clinics' strategic vision to create a patient-centered care model that helps ensure patients receive the right care at the right time, with a focus on prevention, wellness and chronic disease management. Leaders say the grant is necessary for the study, because some components of the care model are typically not paid for by insurance.

"We are taking a comprehensive approach to see what happens when physicians and patients rigorously adhere to guidelines for managing these chronic diseases," said **Penny Wheeler, M.D.**, Allina's chief clinical officer. "These diseases were chosen for the study because the care guidelines are widely accepted and, when not properly treated, can have serious consequences including death, myocardial infarction, stroke, and kidney failure. Our mission is best served by continually supporting patients in their care and lifestyle choices, enabling the patients themselves to be the principal agents in their healing,"

Chronic diseases such as these have reached epidemic proportions, with more than 125 million Americans living with at least one chronic condition. The disease burden for patients and their families is enormous as is the financial cost. Costs related to chronic illness currently consume about 75 percent of the nation's annual \$2 trillion in healthcare expenditures.

The initial site for testing this new care model will be the Medicine Clinic, a primary care clinic staffed by internal medicine residents from Abbott Northwestern Hospital, the University of Minnesota and their teachers. The clinic is located at 2800 Chicago Ave. S., across the street from Abbott Northwestern. The clinic provides care for a wide spectrum of patients, including many from the inner city.

"This is a perfect example of what the founder of the Robina Foundation, James Binger, would have wanted -- a complete revamping of a system to benefit many people," says **Gordon Aamoth, M.D.**, president of the Robina Foundation.

The care model includes four key elements: care guides, electronic care plans, team-oriented care and coaches:

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Patients in the study will have non-clinical care guides to give them information, help navigate the health care system and encourage appropriate self-care.

Each patient will have a care plan that both they and their care providers can access, embedded into their electronic medical record. Patients will be able to use the plan to measure their progress towards optimal health or disease management and see their next steps.

Each patient will also have a team of providers, from primary care physicians to social workers and nutritionists, who will work with them to develop the care plan. The entire care team will have access to their health care plan and progress.

A person who is close to the patient, such as a family member, spouse or friend, will be part of the care team to encourage the patient to comply with the care plan.

"We envision a care model in which patients, physicians, care guides, and a trusted family member or friend work together to support patients in achieving better health outcomes. This is part of a national initiative to transform traditional primary care medical offices into 'patient-centered medical homes,'" said Richard Adair, M.D, medical director of Abbott Northwestern's Medicine Clinic and the study's principle investigator.

If the model shows success in helping patients better manage their chronic conditions, physicians plan to extend the model to additional patients at suburban clinics in Edina and Richfield over the next three years.

This work is complementary to another initiative being undertaken by Allina: The Backyard Project. Announced in June as part of the [Center for Healthcare Innovation](#), the Backyard Project will work in the Phillips and Powderhorn neighborhoods of Minneapolis to forge new models for improving residents' health status and understanding how medical, social, educational and economic factors are interdependent and impact health.

More about Abbott Northwestern and the Robina Foundation

The [Robina Foundation](#), a Minnesota-based private grantmaking foundation, seeks to positively impact critical social issues by encouraging innovation and financially supporting transformative projects of its four institutional partners. These partners, selected by the Foundation's founder, James H. Binger, are: Abbott Northwestern Hospital, Minneapolis, MN; The Council on Foreign Relations, New York, NY; University of Minnesota Law School, Minneapolis, MN; and Yale University, New Haven, CT.

[Abbott Northwestern Hospital](#) is part of Allina Hospitals & Clinics, a not-for-profit health care system of hospitals, clinics and other patient care services that provides exceptional care to communities throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin and employs more than 22,000 people.

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