

PRESS RELEASE

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Health Affairs Highlights San Diego's Successful Effort to Reduce Heart Attacks

On Tuesday September 4th, the leading health policy journal *Health Affairs* published the article "[One in Five Fewer Heart Attacks: Impact, Savings, and Sustainability in San Diego County-wide Collaborative](#)," which shows the impact of intensive efforts to drive down heart attacks at a regional level. This article demonstrates significant reductions in heart attacks in San Diego County over a six-year period following a county-wide collaboration to prevent heart disease known as *Be There San Diego*.

Heart disease is currently the number one cause of death in the United States, and the number two cause of death in San Diego County. Between 2011-2016, San Diego County's total number of heart attacks decreased by 22% compared to an 8% decrease in the rest of the state during the same time period. A collaborative group of researchers from the RAND Corporation, UC Berkeley, and Stanford University estimated that this resulted in 3,826 fewer heart attacks in San Diego and thereby saved the healthcare system \$86 million. **RAND further estimated that if these levels of performance had been achieved statewide over this period, over \$930,000,000 in hospital costs as well as 42,000 hospitalizations for heart attacks could have been avoided.**

Since 2010, clinical and community leaders have been collaborating to reduce heart attacks and strokes through county-wide reduction in risk factors focused on hypertension, cholesterol, and controlling blood sugar levels. The evidence on the cardiovascular benefits of controlling these risk factors has been accumulating since the first publications from the path-breaking [Framingham Heart Study](#) nearly 60 years ago. Despite this knowledge, as many as half of adults at risk for heart attacks and strokes do not have their blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar, key risk factors, adequately controlled. State and local leaders that launched *Be There San Diego* brought the major health care provider groups in San Diego together to improve their approaches to lowering risk in the patients they served through adopting proven best practices such as monitoring blood pressure at home.

Allen Fremont, MD, PhD, lead author at the RAND Corporation, states that "These results show that a science-based health collaborative, like *Be There San Diego*, can improve outcomes while lowering costs."

The collaborative was launched by the Right Care Initiative of the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health and the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health in collaboration with the California Department of Managed Health Care. The launch of the San Diego collaborative and associated research was supported by a grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health. The goal was to share best practices to prevent heart attacks, strokes, and diabetic complications for vulnerable patients through the control of cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar. UCSD Cardiologist Dr. Anthony DeMaria, *Be There San Diego* Chair, said "we wanted to create a Heart Attack and Stroke Free Zone so that everyone can '*be there*' for their loved ones."

To read the Health Affairs abstract: <http://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.0443>

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