



CHW Helps Patient Comfortably Return Home After Amputation

Avera Community Health Resource Center CHWs support communities with compassion and cultural understanding.

The Avera Community Health Resource Center opened near the Empower Campus in eastern Sioux Falls, SD. The location was intentional: refugees and immigrants know the space as a place to find helpful support. What sets Avera’s Community Health Resource Center CHWs apart is their shared lived experience with the immigrant and refugee communities they support. Moreover, the CHWs collectively speak over 16 different languages. This deep understanding allows them to recognize and address the unique realities, challenges, and aspirations of these communities, which might otherwise be overlooked. By forging these bonds of trust and empathy, Avera’s CHWs work tirelessly to improve the overall health and well-being of the diverse populations they serve.



OUR CHWs

SERVE TO CREATE CONNECTIONS AND BUILD TRUST

- ANGELA SCHOFFELMAN, CHW PROGRAM MANAGER, AVERA HEALTH

PATIENT BACKGROUND

A man in one of the CHW’s communities experienced an accident where he fell in the snow, rendering him immobile for an extended period of time. This unfortunately resulted in severe damage to the patient’s leg, necessitating hospitalization at an Avera hospital. Despite the efforts of the care team, it was determined that the necessary course of action (to save the patient’s life) was to undergo leg amputation. Throughout the hospital stay, the patient confided in the CHW about concerns surrounding the post-hospitalization phase, uncertain about what to expect upon returning home.

The patient also was dealing with phantom limb pain, a phenomenon unfamiliar to some members of the community. This condition raised concerns among certain individuals regarding the patient’s mental health.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Due to the shared lived experience of the patient and the CHW, the patient was comfortable confiding in the CHW about his concerns about returning home after his stay in the hospital. To address the patient's concerns, the CHW collaborated with the hospital's social worker, working as a team to facilitate modifications in the patient's home environment. As a result of their joint efforts, grab bars and other aids were installed, and a ramp was added, ensuring a safe and accessible living space for the patient. Additionally, the CHW was able to address the community's concerns surrounding the patient's mental health due to his phantom limb pain. The CHW explained to the community the common occurrence of phantom limb pain among amputees. By sharing this information, the CHW played a pivotal role in dispelling the concerns the community had regarding the condition. The patient was also provided with valuable resources and treatment options to effectively cope with the pain, offering comprehensive support during the recovery process.

PATIENT SUCCESSES

With the aids installed in the home, the patient's safety and mobility were improved, ensuring a safe environment for their recovery and daily activities. The resources shared by the CHW with the patient about available resources, supports, and healthcare options have increased the patient's access to essential healthcare



services. The patient can now make more informed decisions about their health and well-being, empowering them to actively engage in their care.

The impact of the CHW's efforts extends beyond the individual patient, as the entire community has benefited from the educational outreach. Through the CHW's initiatives, the community has gained knowledge into a medical condition that was previously unfamiliar to them. The increased awareness has fostered a more compassionate and understanding environment, reducing stigma and misconceptions surrounding the patient's experience. The patient's success goes beyond individual achievements, leaving a lasting positive impact on the patient's well-being and the community's collective health consciousness.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Avera Health is an integrated health system based in Sioux Falls, SD, and serves South Dakota and surrounding areas of Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and North Dakota through six regional centers in Aberdeen, Mitchell, Pierre, Sioux Falls, and Yankton, SD, and Marshall, MN. The Health System includes 37 hospitals, 215 primary and specialty care clinics, 40 senior living facilities in addition to home care and hospice, sports and wellness facilities, home medical equipment outlets, and additional services.

To learn more about the Avera Community Health Resource Center, visit <https://www.avera.org/balance/mission/avera-community-health-care-workers-create-connections-for-diver/>.

This CHW success story was submitted by Angela Schoeffelman, CHW Program Manager for Avera Health, angela.schoeffelman@chwsd.org.



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