

# SUTTER HEALTH

Improving Heart Failure Treatment for Black Patients



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## PRIMARY CONTACT

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## ABOUT SUTTER HEALTH

Sutter Health is a community-based health care system committed to advancing care for everyone. More than just a health system, Sutter serves as a partner in wellness, a hub for innovation and research, an advocate for community health, and a career catalyst for future medical professionals. From its headquarters in Sacramento, California, Sutter provides health care to over 3.5 million Californians through an integrated health system. Sutter delivers high-quality care and treatment when, where, and how people need it through a culture of inclusion and belonging.

## A CASE STUDY OF SUTTER HEALTH'S WORK TO IMPROVE HEART FAILURE TREATMENT

Sutter Health's Heart Project aims to deliver better heart failure treatment to Black patients and build trust by addressing unfair treatment in health care. The project serves patients experiencing heart failure in a virtual pharmacy ambulatory care clinic to ensure they receive optimal pharmaceutical treatment. It also provides patients experiencing food insecurity with access to a digital nutrition program and free food vouchers through Instacart Health. Sutter is collaborating with Black patients to develop health equity quality indicators and collect data on patients' encounters with anti-Black racism in the health care system. Their learnings will inform changes moving forward that intend to create a more equitable and high-quality health care experience for Black Sutter patients.

## WHY THIS FOCUS?

Heart failure is one of several chronic diseases that Black patients across the Sutter Health system are experiencing at younger ages and disproportionate rates than their non-Black counterparts. Recent research has found that Black Sutter patients living with heart failure receive inadequate heart failure medications and experience higher mortality rates, compared to Sutter patients of other races/ethnicities. As a result, Black Sutter patients are 17% more likely to die of heart failure within one year of receiving care due to inadequate pharmaceutical treatment, also known as pharmacoinequity. Inequitable medical access to heart failure treatment is killing Black patients. The Heart Project intends to end this pattern.



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## GOALS

- Black patients feel heard in sharing their experiences of anti-Black racism and harm in the health care system.
- Black patients experience shifts in care within the Sutter system that eliminate harm and medical trauma.
- Black patients receive Guideline Directed Medical Therapy (GDMT) medications at optimal dose.
- Black patients at Sutter have lower heart failure-related admissions within 30 days of hospital discharge.
- Black patients access affordable and quality foods that support heart failure treatment.
- Sutter Health is a trustworthy organization for Black patients, where they know they can and will receive equitable care.

## STRATEGIES

- Gather and analyze data on patient experiences of anti-Black racism in health care.
- Establish more representation of Black voices and experiences in research.
- Collaborate with Black Sutter patients to develop patient-informed health equity quality indicators.
- Screen for food insecurity and provide food vouchers and free access to the MedChef program to patients who will most benefit from these services.
- Enroll 75 Black Sutter Health East Bay patients with heart failure in Sutter's Virtual Pharmacy Ambulatory Care Clinic (VPACC) to ensure that they are on optimal GDMT treatment.
- Improve care coordination with pharmacists/cardiovascular clinicians to ensure equitable pharmaceutical management.

## IMPACT METRICS

- Increased percentage of Black patients being prescribed adequate GDMT with three or more heart failure medications
- Increased percentage of Black patients with heart failure enrolled in the VPACC program
- Reduction in readmissions for Black patients experiencing heart failure
- Data on the prevalence of Black patients' experiences of racism within Sutter Health and documentation of improvements to the patient experience.

## SUPPORTED BY CHCF'S PULSE OF CHANGE INITIATIVE

In late 2023, California Health Care Foundation put out a call for projects that would improve clinical quality of care for Black Californians. Of the many community clinics, hospitals, and technology start-ups from across the state that responded to the call, CHCF awarded grants to eight organizations using a variety of strategies to create a safer, stronger, and fairer health system for Black Californians. Funded projects focus on topics ranging from culturally responsive prenatal care to hypertension management and colorectal cancer screening.



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