



News Release

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More Than a Shave and a Haircut

TTUHSC Students Take Health Care to the Barbershop

November is Diabetes Awareness Month, and one of the most common symptoms of the disease is high blood pressure, or hypertension. In fact, an elevated blood pressure reading can be a warning sign related to many other diseases, including heart attacks, strokes, kidney disease and loss of vision.

To help area residents monitor their blood pressure, students from the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) have formed the Barbershop Blood Pressure Group. The students currently make periodic visits to about 10 Lubbock barber shops to provide free blood pressure checks and general health education on various topics, including diabetes.

According to Yaw Adu, a student from the TTUHSC School of Medicine, the group is dedicated to providing cardiovascular health awareness to the Lubbock community, especially the uninsured and underserved.

“Our organization is dedicated to uplifting the cardiovascular health of all demographics within the Lubbock community,” Adu said. “We do pay a primary focus on African American, Hispanic and uninsured populations because they are more at risk of developing hypertension, and having hypertension can lead to increased risk of various heart diseases such as congestive heart failure, heart attacks or even strokes.”

Fabian Belgara Jr., who works at Lubbock’s 2151 Hair Lounge, has participated in the Barbershop Blood Pressure Group program several times recently as a way to help his customers, and he now discusses blood pressure risks with them when the opportunity arises.

“The best part is getting people to understand it, and (then) that person can tell the next person,” Belgara said. “It can just be a chain reaction to help other people down the road.”

Belgara said the effort has been impactful enough that several patrons have asked him about the program. He also has personally benefitted from the free blood pressure screenings.

“Some people found out they had high blood pressure and it (free blood pressure screening) helped them eat better and change their diet habits,” Belgara said. “The last time I did it, it was elevated, so I switched up my diet. I don’t eat as much, not as late (and) drink more water. It’s dropped a lot, so it’s been a big difference.”

Adu said one of the most unique things about the Barbershop Blood Pressure Group is that it’s a collaborative effort that includes students from the various TTUHSC schools. And barbershops, he added, are a great location for the students to provide free blood pressure checks.

“It's a comfortable environment where a diverse group of people go to regularly,” Adu said. “This is just a great opportunity to bring health care awareness to the people.”

Participating in the Barbershop Blood Pressure Group also has demonstrated to Adu the importance of preventative care and regular screening. Through the group's various events, he has met individuals who have not had a blood pressure check in years because they don't have insurance or the money to purchase a home blood pressure cuff. He said that's why it's important for the organization to reach out to local communities and provide services such as free health care screenings.

“This group has impacted me to where I now know just how important it is for me to become a physician that is a proactive member in his community,” Adu said. “I plan to be the type of physician who goes out and gives free health care screenings and free health education to anyone who needs it. I'm looking forward to becoming a physician who is an advocate for his patients and community members so that they in turn may become advocates for themselves and for their health.”

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