

Health Ministry Program

The 40 - Day Journey

Objectives

- Educate African American and minority families about the importance of healthy eating.
- Increase their daily regimen of cardiovascular activities.
- Increase participant knowledge of stress triggers and stress management techniques to help them maintain healthy lifestyles.
- Emphasize and reinforce doctor involvement to ensure medication compliance.
- Motivate participants to continue with healthy food selections at home when the program is completed.



*K*eeping true to its mission to help people get care, stay well and build healthy communities, Keystone Mercy Health Plan created in 2000 a faith-based, wellness program for African American women called The Health Ministry Program for Women. A component of the program, The 40-Day Journey, focuses on the family through a six-week program emphasizing:

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Water Intake
- Medication Compliance

Components

As part of the 40-Day Journey, a questionnaire was specifically designed to collect demographic information, and pre- and post-health assessments were done including screening results for:

- Blood pressure
- BMI
- Body circumference
- Girth
- Glucose
- HbA1c
- Health assessment
- Height
- Lipids
- Total cholesterol
- Triglycerides
- Weight

Partners

- African American Faith-Based Churches
- Albert Einstein Health System
- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- Chi Eta Phi Nursing Sorority
- Congregational Nurses Committee
- Fox Chase Cancer Center
- Healthy by Design
- Mercy Hospital of Philadelphia
- Nazareth Hospital Stroke Center
- Philadelphia Department of Health
- The Philadelphia Mayor's Office of Health and Fitness

Outcomes

In the weeks following the 40-Day Journey, almost all of the participants experienced positive results. There were a total of 2,500 participants from 12 churches, of which 825 were Keystone Mercy members. Of the participants who followed the three-pillared program (a plant-based diet where possible, intermittent training and cognitive behavior change), preliminary data* found the following health improvements among participants with diabetes:

- Nearly a 20% drop in triglycerides
- 22% decrease in LDL ("bad") cholesterol (31% for those with Type-1 diabetes)
- 17% reduction in fasting blood sugar
- 4.6% weight reduction (3% for Type-1 patients)
- 5% reduction in resting heart rate
- Nearly a 6% drop in systolic blood pressure
- 4% decline in diastolic blood pressure

In a survey, participants reported, on average, a 73% decrease in pain and an 81% improvement in mobility and flexibility. They also reported, on average, an 84.5% improvement in their attitude on hope for the future.

**Results of our programs are more anecdotal than scientific.*



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