News Release
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High Blood Pressure Diagnosis Inaccurate at Least 50% of the Time
New website educates clinics and patients about correct blood pressure measurement techniques

SALT LAKE COUNTY—Most patients visiting their local clinic are unaware there’s a 50% chance their blood pressure measurement is inaccurate. Today, the Utah Million Hearts Coalition introduced a new website to help patients and providers alike: CheckMyPressure.org offers information and tools to help patients understand why accurate blood pressure assessment is so critical and how they can help ensure blood pressure measurement is accurate.

A 2016 study from the Journal of Clinical Hypertension found that in-office blood pressure measurements were inaccurate more often than not, either causing the misdiagnosis of hypertension (resulting in the inappropriate administration of medication) or causing patients at-risk for stroke and heart problems to go without necessary intervention or treatment.

“Patients need to take their health into their own hands,” said Anni McKinnon, Utah Million Hearts Coalition member. “Learn how blood pressure should be measured. Speak up when your blood pressure is not taken correctly and help your provider get an accurate measurement and, subsequently, an accurate diagnosis.”

Patients can take the following steps to help ensure a correct blood pressure measurement:
1. Thirty minutes prior to taking your blood pressure, do not drink caffeine or alcohol, use tobacco products, exercise or feel stressed, or anxious.
2. Sit and relax for five minutes before taking your blood pressure.
3. Sit up straight with both feet flat on the floor and your back supported.
4. The cuff should be the proper size and placed on your bare arm or over thin clothing.
5. Your arm should be at heart level and supported.
6. If your reading is high, your blood pressure should be taken two more times, waiting one minute between readings.

Even when blood pressure measuring techniques are correct, some patients experience a “white-coat effect” and exhibit high blood pressure in-office.

“About 30% of patients with elevated in-office blood pressure turn out to have normal out-of-office measurements,” continued McKinnon, “so home monitoring is also important in some cases.”

Health officials remind patients that they can also help control their risks for cardiovascular disease by managing their weight, engaging in regular physical activity, controlling blood pressure and cholesterol, and not using tobacco products.

CheckMyPressure.org also includes tips for health care providers on how to correctly measure blood pressure.

In 2016, the Utah Million Hearts Coalition recognized 13 Utah medical clinics for their commitment to achieving excellence in blood pressure measurement and hypertension control.

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The Utah Million Hearts Coalition is a community collaboration among Utah’s public health departments, local health care organizations, professional medical associations, and health-related nonprofit organizations. For more information about the coalition, visit healthinsight.org/bloodpressure