

## **Cigna Foundation Gives Grant to NYU to Help Minority, Senior Women with Heart Disease**

BLOOMFIELD, Conn., November 17, 2014 - When it comes to hearts, men and women are not created equally. Women who have experienced a heart attack have a higher risk of a subsequent heart attack, or death, compared to men, according to the American Heart Association. To help women live long and well with heart disease, the Cigna Foundation today announced a \$100,000 World of Difference grant to New York University College of Nursing (NYUCN) to pilot and test *Helping Women Help Themselves to Improve Heart Health*. The program's objective is to improve and sustain heart healthy behaviors in racial minority and older women with, or at risk, of heart disease, and it will include YMCAs of New York where support is offered in a community setting.

"Successful self-care including taking medications, eating a low sodium/low fat diet, exercising, managing symptoms and monitoring health have shown to improve the individual health and well-being of women and heart health outcomes dramatically," explained Dr. Victoria Dickson, program leader from NYUCN. "However, many patients find this self-care and behavioral change challenging, especially during the transition from the hospital to work and other daily routines. We're excited to pilot and test a unique self-care intervention sensitive to women's cultural and social preferences, personalized to women's dietary tastes and norms."

*Helping Women Help Themselves* uses the resources of a well-established social service organization, the YMCA of Greater New York. The program will be housed at three YMCA branches near NYU, Columbia University, and Mount Sinai Hospital, which serve diverse racial and ethnic populations. To encourage active participation, a two-month membership to the YMCA will be provided at no cost to women who enroll in the program. Team support and motivation also will be provided by Cigna employees, who will assist with the project's social media and online discussion groups facilitated through the YMCA website. As well, Cigna's Women's Colleague Resource Group, an employee support and networking organization, will serve on the advisory board for the project.

"The NYUCN program is an ideal fit with Cigna's focus on ending health disparities," said Scott Evelyn, Cigna's president and general manager, Tri-State market. "One of the most compelling aspects of the program is the social support it provides to women in a community setting, where women have access to physical activity, nutritional education, and supportive wellness resources."

NYUCN will recruit participants for the project through posters and fliers at medical offices, at the branches of the three YMCAs where the pilot will take place, and through cardiologists, physicians and nurse practitioner partners. The success of the program will be evaluated according to improvement in women's self-care and quality of life, along with metrics such as participation in the program, women's blood pressure, Body Mass Index, and cholesterol levels. If successful, the program can be considered for expansion throughout the YMCA's national network of 2,600 centers.

The Cigna Foundation World of Difference grants provide support for improving children's wellness, senior care, women's health and health equity - the four social priorities for Cigna's corporate responsibility platform known as Cigna Connects.

### **About the Cigna Foundation**

The Cigna Foundation, founded in 1962, is a private foundation funded by contributions from Cigna Corporation (NYSE: CI) and its subsidiaries. The Cigna Foundation supports organizations sharing its commitment to enhancing the health of individuals and families, and the well-being of their communities, with a special focus on those communities where Cigna employees live and work.

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