



Vanguard Health Chicago Healthy Beverage Case Study

*In everything we do, we ask ourselves,
"is this helping someone achieve health for life?"*

Demographic information

Vanguard Health Chicago is a growing healthcare system, which includes MacNeal Hospital in Berwyn, Weiss Memorial Hospital in Chicago, West Suburban Medical Center in Oak Park, and Westlake Hospital in Melrose Park. There are 1.5 million in-patient and outpatient visits annually at the four sites and 6000 employees. Vanguard Medical Group deploys over 150 providers across more than 20 locations throughout the metropolitan Chicago area. Striving to be an active and relevant community partner, Vanguard Health Chicago coordinates several outreach programs and support groups and has multiple academic affiliations and community partnerships to better serve its diverse populations.

Embracing its mission to "help people achieve health for life," Vanguard is committed to creating lifelong relationships by changing the way health and healthcare are delivered in our communities.

MacNeal Hospital (Berwyn, IL)

For nearly a century, Vanguard MacNeal has been providing quality healthcare to the west and southwest suburbs of Chicago. Along with Vanguard MacNeal Hospital, a 427-bed fully accredited teaching hospital, the network is comprised of 10 primary care centers, a resource library, a school for at-risk children and a behavioral health services program. There are 400 physicians.

Weiss Memorial Hospital (Chicago, IL)

Founded in 1953, Vanguard Weiss Memorial Hospital, affiliated with the University of Chicago Medical Center, is a Joint Commission-accredited, 236-bed facility. Weiss serves a primary service area of more than 600,000 people, including Chicago neighborhoods from Lakeview and Logan Square, to Rogers Park and the suburb of Skokie. Weiss has more than 450 physicians in 42 adult medical specialties and more than 1,000 employees who speak more than two dozen languages.

West Suburban Hospital (Oak Park, IL)

West Suburban Medical Center first opened its doors as a 90-bed facility in 1914. Today, almost 100 years later, West Suburban Medical Center is a 234 bed, full-service teaching hospital that continues serving the health care needs of its community. There are 325 physicians in 28 specialties.

Westlake Hospital (Melrose Park, IL)

Founded in 1927, Vanguard Westlake Hospital is a full-service health care facility serving the diverse populations of the western suburbs of Chicago including Bensenville, Berkeley, Elmhurst, Elmwood Park, Franklin Park, Hillside, Maywood, Melrose Park, Northlake, River Grove, Stone Park and Westchester. Vanguard Westlake is a 225-bed teaching hospital with over 300 physicians in 44 physician specialties.

Executive Summary Statement

“Sodas, sports drinks, and other drinks that are artificially loaded with sugar are associated with a host of negative health effects and increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart attacks, dental problems, and even cancer. The health care community has an obligation not only to treat, but to help prevent, these conditions, some of which are at epidemic levels.”

– **Dr. Anthony Tedeschi, Chief Medical Officer
Vanguard Health Chicago**

The Vanguard Chicago Market kicked off a healthy beverage campaign, eliminating all sugar-loaded drinks in all of the Chicago based hospitals, healthcare sites, and market office in July, 2012. The sugar-loaded drinks were replaced with healthier options. By 2013, Vanguard Health Chicago will no longer serve any sugar or artificially sweetened beverages.

The Problem

In Illinois, the obesity rate has nearly doubled since 1995. Nearly two-thirds of all Illinoisans are overweight or obese.ⁱ Illinois has one of the ten highest obesity rates for adolescents in the nation and the fourth worst child obesity rate.ⁱⁱ Sugar-loaded beverages are a major contributor to obesity and obesity-related diseases. Consumption of these drinks contributes approximately 46% of the added sugar in the American dietⁱⁱⁱ and may account for one-fifth of all weight gain between 1977 and 2007.^{iv} Reducing consumption of these drinks can improve health outcomes.

Hospitals are role models for the healthy choices that lead to better health outcomes. They can build better health care delivery systems and create better workplaces by changing their food and beverage environments to support and encourage healthier choices.

Addressing the Problem

In April, 2012, Vanguard Health Chicago created a Healthy Beverage Work Group to assess the beverage environment and create a healthy beverage program and policies. This group represented all business units in the market (see sidebar) and worked with technical assistance and support from the Illinois Public Health Institute, American Heart Association and Health Care Without Harm.

On July 1, 2012, Vanguard Health Chicago removed all drinks that were high in sugar, including regular soda, energy drinks, sports drinks, pre-sweetened coffee and tea drinks, juice drinks with added sugar in addition to whole or 2% milk. Sugary beverages were replaced with drinks that have moderate amounts of sugar, fat and sodium or containing artificial sweeteners like low sugar drinks, 100% fruit juice or vegetable juice (in small portions), diet drinks, low-sodium sports drinks, soy milk and 1% milk. Large quantities of water, seltzer water and 1% or skim milk are offered. The prices for healthy drinks were lowered to encourage consumption.

A color-coded system (patterned after a stoplight) was used to make the distinction between the drinks and educate the hospital constituents (patients, employees, visitors, volunteers and community members) about the drinks. Red drinks are high in sugar and sodium with 12 grams or more of sugar. Yellow drinks have between 6 and 12 grams of sugar or contain artificial sweeteners and green drinks have 5 grams or less of sugar.

Access to potable water was increased, with one hospital offering infused water during lunch hours at the cafeteria.

An implementation plan was developed incorporating five evidence-based strategies of MAPPS (media, access, point of purchase information, price and social support/services).

Implementation Process

Vanguard's process was multi-disciplinary and collaborative, which made the transition fairly seamless. The following lists the implementation steps:

- In April 2012, the Healthy Beverage Working Group began biweekly meetings. Sub-groups were assigned specific tasks to plan and implement between team meetings.
- The members of the Healthy Beverage Working Group attended the April 25, 2012 symposium, *Rethink Your Drink: The Impact of Sugar-Loaded Beverages on*

The Vanguard Healthy Beverage Work Group was comprised of:

- Senior Management Team Members
- Food & Nutrition Directors
- Human Resources
- Community Relations
- Senior Administration Team Member, Market Office
- Clinical Management
- Marketing/Public Relations

the Obesity Epidemic & Clinical and Environmental Strategies to Reduce Consumption.

- On the day of the Rethink Your Drink symposium, a major media announcement was made about the Vanguard effort that received coverage from Chicago Tribune, WBBM-TV and WLS-TV.
- An inventory was taken of the drinks served and sold and at what access points. A decision was made not to purchase any more sugar-loaded beverages as they sold out.
- All vendor contracts were reviewed. Meetings began with vendors to share the decision to create a healthier beverage environment and the new parameters of their relationship with Vanguard. Vendors were asked to consider what beverages they would supply that were less sugary or contained no sugar.
- Vendors supplied several new options. The Healthy Beverage Work Group gathered to taste the drink options and vote on which had the best taste and met the criteria for amount of sugar and serving size.
- Sugary drinks advertisements were removed from vending machines and coolers.
- Meetings were held with on-site providers (Walgreens at one site) to let them know about the new policy and ask that they join Vanguard in the healthy beverage campaign. Walgreens agreed to sell only healthy beverages and implemented the Vanguard criteria.
- Communication and educational materials were developed with the same color-coded definitions used by the Boston Public Health Commission.
- On June 21, 2012 Bill Foley, Market President sent a message to all Vanguard Health Chicago constituents about the environment change, describing it as a demonstration of “our commitment to our mission through our action.”
- During the week of July 9, each hospital hosted a taste-testing of the healthy beverages that replaced the sugar-loaded ones.

Benefits

“People feel good about what they are eating and drinking. These changes have been good for our business, but more importantly good for the health of those we serve and employ. It’s a win-win. I think some people wonder why we didn’t do this sooner.”

***Theresa Rudnick
Senior Director for Support Services***

Many benefits have come from this effort. Vanguard Health Chicago employees have shared improved health benefits including weight loss. Many have shared how proud they are to work at a place that puts its mission into action and genuinely cares about them.

Community partnerships have been strengthened and expanded. Working partners like the American Heart Association, Illinois Public Health Institute, and Health Care Without Harm shared tools, resources and their expertise, making the planning and implementation process much easier.

The media campaigns have garnered positive stories depicting the Vanguard Health Chicago system as one that is caring and committed.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

There are four hospitals in the Vanguard Health Chicago system; each with a different organization style and culture as well as their own set of priorities and challenges. This meant that communication was an essential part of the process. Understanding the nuances of each place was necessary for the success of the effort. One implication of these differences meant developing overall strategies with differing timelines. For example, the food environment was the first place that changes were made at Vanguard MacNeal; the other hospitals are just beginning to make food changes.

Many of the things that were concerns prior to the process turned out to be fairly easy to manage. Discussions about revenue losses and backlash from the employees, patients, volunteers and community members were more intense than the actual responses. Yes, there were complaints at every stage of the transformation, but there were not many and they did not last for long. Over time, there was more vocalized positive feedback and support.

Next Steps

Now that the beverage environment has been transformed, three of the four hospitals will work on changing the food environment. Since the implementation of the program was so quick, tracking tools were not developed. A tracking system was launched in September 2012. The education efforts will be intensified and expanded, ensuring that the message of the negative impact of the drinks is emphasized

ⁱ Levi, J., Vinter, Segal, L., St. Laurent, R., Kohn, D.(2011) *F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2011* Retrieved from Trust for America's Health website:

<http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/TFAH2011FasInFat10.pdf>

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ National Cancer Institute. National Institutes of Health. Sources of Added Sugars in the Diets of the U.S. Population ages 2 years and older, NHANES 2005-2006. Retrieved from http://riskfactor.cancer.gov/diet/foodsources/added_sugars/table5a.html

^{iv} Woodward-Lopez G., Kao, J, Ritchie, L... (2010) To What Extent Have Sweetened Beverages Contributed to the Obesity Epidemic? Public Health Nutrition, 2010 Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20860886>