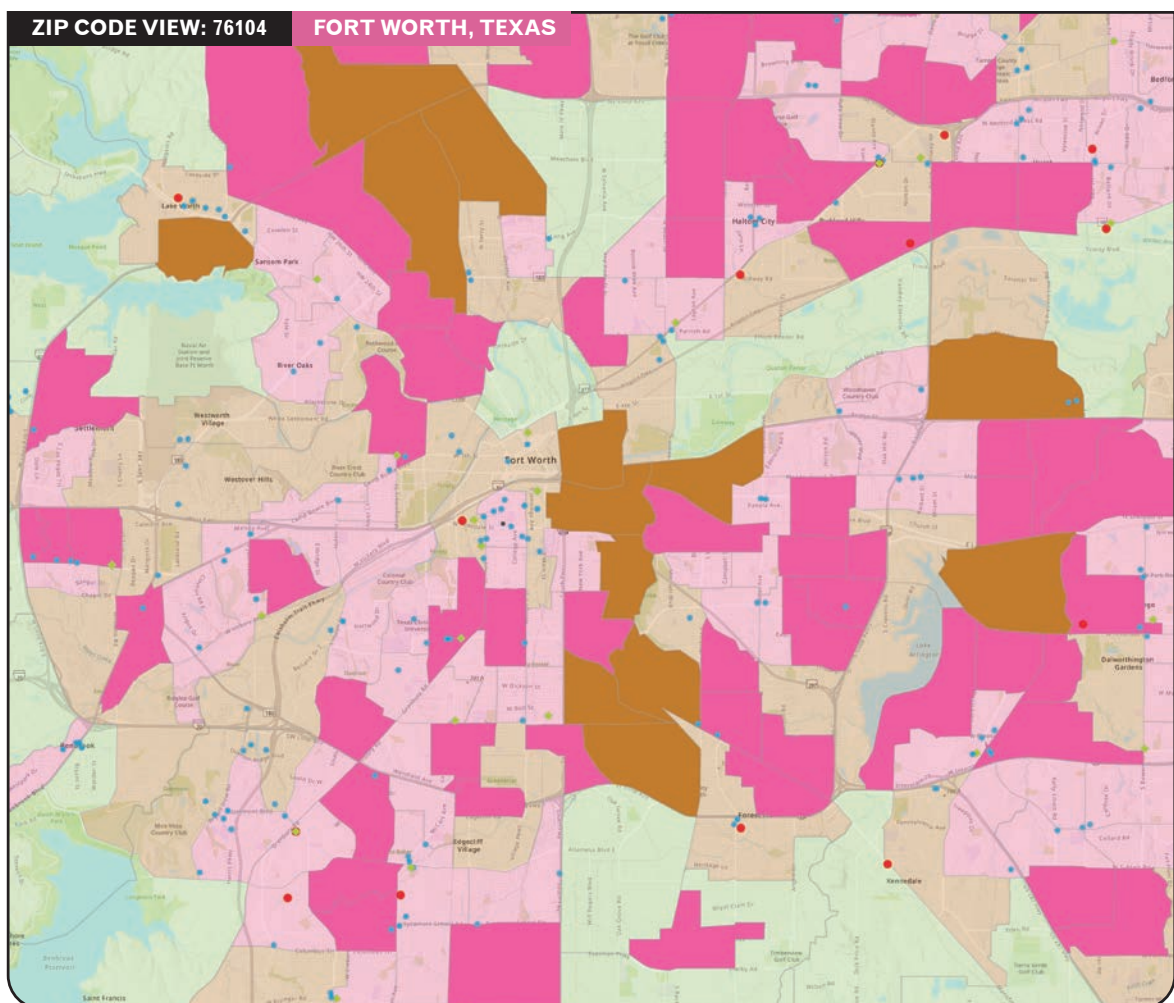
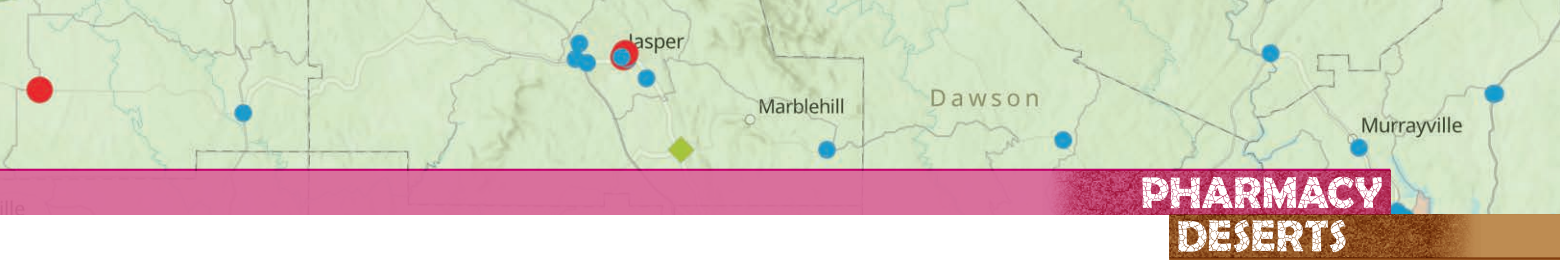


MARKET EXPANSION THROUGH CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

**How one pharmacy desert community found a
unique collaboration through CPESN USA**

by Jay Williams





It's widely acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the vital role of local, community-based pharmacies as essential points of care throughout many neighborhoods in the United States. These pharmacies serve not only as places to pick up prescriptions and over-the-counter medicine, but also as hubs for diagnostic and preventive health services.

However, despite their crucial function in providing medications and essential health care services, research has shown the number of pharmacies in urban areas serving minority populations is dwindling. In one of these "pharmacy deserts" located in **Fort Worth, Texas** (postal ZIP code 76104), NCPA member Best Value Pharmacies found a unique community collaboration through CPESN® USA's Community Connected initiative to fulfill the needs of the local residents. The pharmacy desert map on the opposite page is a snap shot from the Pharmacy Shortage Area mapping tool developed by professors Dima M Qato, PharmD, MPH, PhD and Robert Vos, PhD at the University of Southern California in collaboration with NCPA.

This collaboration brought together various trusted stakeholders within the community, including a church, a mosque, a major state university, and the pharmacy itself, to launch a diabetes self-management education (DSME) program. This initiative was aimed at supporting a predominantly Black community situated in one of the city's poorest areas, which also happens to have the lowest life expectancy in the state of Texas – 67 years.

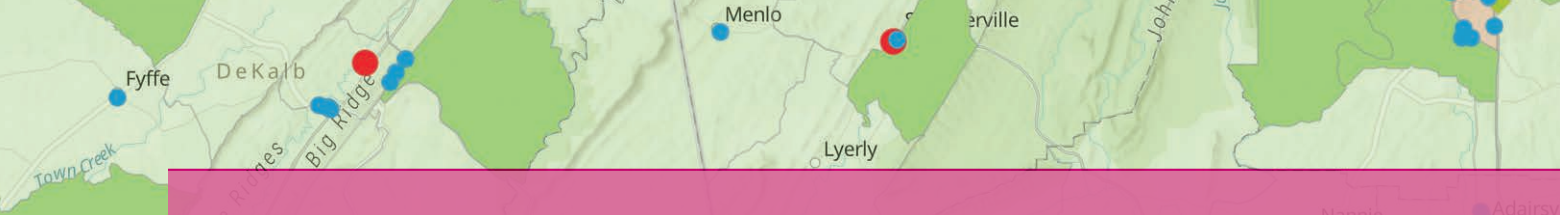
"When the opportunity came to partner with a church with a predominately Black membership and a predominantly immigrant population at the Ahmadiyya Mosque in the vicinity of our pharmacy to provide diabetes self-management and education classes, we relished the opportunity to build bridges of communication through the common need for health care access," says Carter High, director of Best Value Pharmacies and immediate past president of Texas Pharmacy Association. "There are 38.4 million people living with diabetes, and

at Best Value Pharmacies we are striving to do our part to help serve those individuals and provide resources in the communities in which we are embedded."

Each stakeholder brought value to the collaboration:

- **New Mount Rose Missionary Baptist Church:** The church served as the host for the classes and led the recruitment and promotional efforts.
- **Best Value Pharmacies:** Best Value has been DSME board accredited location over the past five years through the American Diabetes Care and Education Specialists (ADCES).
- **University of Texas:** The university provided administration, research outcomes and grant funding through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Texas State Health Department to increase the number of pharmacies in Texas with DSME accreditation in collaboration with CPESN Texas.
- **Ahmadiyya Muslim community:** The community provided volunteers to help design and teach the course and provided materials and personnel: physician assistants, nurses, and pharmacists.
- **CPESN medical billing supports (through CPESN Texas):** CPESN supported the pharmacy submission of medical bills for encounters with appropriate patients.
- **CPESN Community Connected:** Community Connected facilitated the successful collaboration among all stakeholders.





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For the last four months, the collaboration has offered diabetes classes every Thursday using the curriculum ADCES 7 self-care behaviors, a proven framework for self-management of diabetes and other related conditions. Class topics include healthy eating, being active, taking medication, healthy coping, monitoring, problem solving, and lowering risk.

The classes, part of a pilot program, were facilitated by Angelina Tucker PharmD, BCGP, CDCES, assistant director for CPESN USA's Community Connected program. She says it was originally a proposal for grant funding through the University of Texas as a triad relationship between the pharmacy (Best Value), a physician or nurse, and a community-based entity (the mosque and the church). Letters of support from all three were required. The physician and nurse were from the mosque and agreed to refer patients but also volunteer to help if needed. Most classes have between 5-10 participants.

“The grant did not get approved, but I went ahead with the classes anyway,” Angelina says. “I decided to volunteer my time to do the classes. Using CPESN medical billing supports we were able to bill and get paid for the classes for some patients.”

POSITIVE RESPONSE

The results have been encouraging. Each participant's blood glucose levels were tested when they started the class. Angelina says one of the patients had a reduction in his A1C from 10 at the beginning of the class to 8 at the end.

“He said that for the first time ever he saw his doctor smile when she looked at his lab result,” she says.

Another woman said that prior to the class she had been diagnosed with diabetes but, not having any symptoms, never made any adjustments. After the class she began monitoring her blood glucose, increasing her activity, and being more mindful of her food choices and feeling better.

Saeed Chaudhry serves as president of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Fort Worth chapter. She says that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community spans more than 200 nations with membership exceeding tens of millions of people.

“The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Fort Worth chapter (Bait-ul-Qayyum Mosque) is very excited to collaborate with Best Value Pharmacies and the New Mount Rose Missionary Baptist Church to help reduce the morbidity

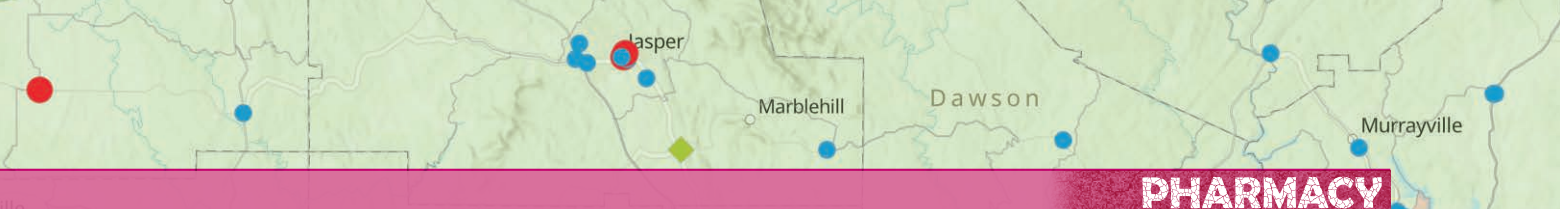
and mortality rate associated with diabetes and improve the quality of life of the people living in our communities,” Saeed says. “We need to be able to transcend the barriers of diversity, strengthen our bonds of fellowship and collaborate with each other to really make a difference.”

Rev. Kye P. Tatum, Sr., pastor of the New Mount Rose Missionary Baptist Church since 2018, was born and raised in the 76104 ZIP code, so he is acutely aware of the struggles people in his community are experiencing on a daily basis and is a tireless advocate in trying to improve their lives.

As he explains, the dearth of health care facilities, businesses, and economic development in 76104 compounds the difficulties (though he is hoping to change some of that through a coffee stimulus project in partnership with Texas A&M University, among other initiatives).

“We just have so many challenges and as a pastor, I spend my lifetime trying to find solutions to them,” Kye says. “So, when we get opportunities like this, we sure appreciate it.”

When asked if he is pleased with the results, Kye doesn't hesitate. “Absolutely! To be informed is to be



PHARMACY DESERTS

forewarned. Dr. Tucker is showing them how to be forewarned when their A1C levels go down or they go too high, and when to check. That's education you can't beat."

For Kye, diabetes hits close to home as his wife Tanya has been diagnosed with it and was part of the class. She has been more cognizant of her diet, exercise, and other lifestyle steps to improve her health.

"Now she has an accountability team," he says. "They share in the classes, talk among themselves and are trying to be honest with each other. She can talk about the benefits it's had for her. The lovely and pleasant personality of Dr. Tucker makes it that much better."

In terms of outreach, Kye says there is a minister's group that meets weekly, and one of the pastors from the group is in the program.

"We've asked them to spread the word on their platforms and they have," he says. "Word of mouth is always good and social media has been good to us. But there's nothing better than success, to talk about the benefits of the class."

Kye says collaborations and partnerships can make a significant difference.

"There's nothing but good about it, absolutely," he says. "When you fend for yourself as we do so often, you have to do some good for yourself. We have no desire for any bad to come out of anything that we do, so we have to partner with people who mean us well. And the community is relying on us to bring people in who mean us well."

LOOKING AHEAD

Future business plans for Best Value Pharmacies are to expand services to this community and utilize the tools of the CPESN Community Connected initiative to find and collaborate with trusted stakeholders and reach the untapped diverse demographic near pharmacies (see sidebar below for more about Community Connected). Goals include expanding the pilot model to other community pharmacies nationwide to expand pharmacy access in urban communities serving

minority populations and close the health care gap. For more on Community Connected, visit www.communityconnected.us. Visit Best Value Pharmacies at www.bestvaluepharmacies.com. ■

Jay Williams is CPESN® USA director of marketing and communications.

Angelina Tucker PharmD, BCGP, CDCES, assistant director for CPESN USA's Community Connected program, also assisted with the article.

What is Community Connected?

Community Connected is a CPESN® USA initiative utilizing patient-centered services to meet the needs of the people who live, work, play, and pray around local, community-based pharmacies. The initiative's focus is to help pharmacies reach patient populations through fostering cultural awareness and providing support services that address unique needs. This patient-centered approach improves the quality of care to underserved patients and creates additional revenue for the local pharmacy.



Through Community Connected, community-based pharmacists and pharmacy owners are equipped with resources to strategically implement patient care services. From small gestures like offering traditional sweets to Hindu physicians during Diwali or providing red envelopes with lucky \$2 bills to Chinese employees, to more significant accommodations such as scheduling female staff and providing private areas for Muslim women to receive vaccinations, these initiatives promote employee retention and create lifelong customer relationships.

Community Connected also facilitates demographic profiling of pharmacies, allowing pharmacy owners to compare their walk-in patient demographics to the ZIP code vicinity of their pharmacy surrounding areas. This analysis helps identify opportunities to bridge gaps in care by recognizing ethnic, religious, special interest, and underserved groups within the community. Armed with this data, pharmacies can tailor services that are inclusive, considerate, and genuinely patient-centered. You can access the publicly available, Community Connected resources by visiting www.CommunityConnected.us. If you want to get involved, email Angelina Tucker, PharmD, BCGP, CDCES, assistant director for CPESN USA's Community Connected program, at atucker@cpesn.com.