

“Once upon a time...”

In South Los Angeles, there lived a grandmother named Maria. She loved to cook delicious food for her family, drink coffee with her friends from church, and watch TV with her cat, Oscar. Maria was diagnosed with diabetes 8 years ago, and her cholesterol and blood pressure have been creeping up over the past few years.

“Every day...”

Maria tries to take care of herself and her family. Sometimes she ends up spending more time taking care of her grandkids than herself. Maria doesn't have a car, and she is glad that the walking she does to get to the bus or run errands in her neighborhood is good for her health. Maria knows she should check her blood sugar more, but the test strips are expensive. The last few times she tested, the numbers have been high. She's been meaning to get in to see her doctor, but she has missed her last few appointments because it takes a long time to get to the clinic on the bus and she couldn't leave her grandkids early enough.

“But one day...”

Lucy, a community health worker from her clinic, calls. Lucy tells Maria that they've noticed she hasn't been able to make it to her last few appointments and asks Maria how things are going. Maria tells Lucy about how difficult it's been to get to the clinic on the bus with all her competing priorities.

“Because of that...”

Lucy tells Maria about a new program with a ride share company. She offers to arrange a ride to pick Maria up for her appointment and drop her back off afterwards. Because of the new program, Maria makes it to her next appointment at the clinic and works with Lucy to make some other changes to her daily routines.

“Until finally...”

Maria is able to get the kind of support she needs to manage her chronic health conditions more effectively. She is so relieved to have some help juggling everything she needs to do to take care of her health.

“And ever since then...”

Maria has not missed another doctor's appointment. With Lucy's support, she has changed some of her habits and her last HbA1c was lower than it has been in a few years.

“Once upon a time...”

In South Los Angeles, there was a community health center that has worked hard to serve their community for years. A few years ago, they launched a community health worker (CHW) program and hired three CHWs. One of the CHWs is named Lucy.

“Every day...”

Lucy tries to connect with as many patients as she can. She knows of many different resources and services in the community and really cares about her patients. She notices that most of her patients are referred by just a few of the providers. She wonders whether the other providers know about all the things she does to help patients manage and improve their health; she worries that patients who could use her help are missing out.

“But one day...”

The clinic manager tells Lucy that they are going to start working on improving collaboration between team members. The CHWs start attending team meetings to give short reminders about their work and tell patient success stories. They also start rotating through the care team huddles to talk about the patients who will be seen that day. The providers, medical assistants, and CHWs all get to know and trust each other better.

“Because of that...”

More providers start referring their patients to the CHWs. When the QI team gets together to talk about improvement projects, they brainstorm additional ideas for matching patients to CHW services. Someone suggests using their missed appointment data to identify patients who might really benefit from talking to a CHW. They decide to run a report identifying everyone who had 2 or more missed appointments in the last 6 months, and the CHWs start calling a few people a day to check in.

“Until finally...”

Lucy calls Maria, a loving grandmother who is really struggling to take care of her own health. With Lucy's support, Maria has made it to her appointments, changed some of her health habits, and even reduced her HbA1c. It makes Lucy really happy to see what a big difference she can make in her patients' lives.

“And ever since then...”

Lucy has felt much more effective and satisfied in her job. She has a closer working relationship with the other members of the care team and feels more confident that she is connecting to the people who really need her support.