

Health Coaches Increase Patient Empowerment and Lead to Healthier Lifestyles: Emerging Roles Encourage Team-Based Approach to Patient Care.

Beyond the vibrant art scene and bustling crowds in Manhattan's garment district, Luis Carrasco smooths out his lab coat and clears his throat as he calmly waits to greet his first patient of the day. Carrasco is a health coach at Union Health Center in Chelsea. Like many other private and public practices around the city, Union Health Center has introduced health coaching to enhance patient experience and to ease the busy schedule of primary care clinicians. Health coaches provide personal guidance and educational assistance to empower patients dealing with chronic diseases or health issues.

With a welcoming smile and amiable presence, Carrasco expertly engages with patients through personalized meetings, spending time educating patients about managing chronic conditions or setting up a plan to reach certain health goals. "It's something more than the role of a medical assistant," Carrasco explains. "As a health coach, you take the time to sit down with a patient, listen to them, discuss their condition and develop ways to help through personal motivation and education. There is also more of an emphasis on health coaches to be well-equipped in teaching techniques of self-management support."

Through scheduled meetings and referrals from physicians, patients at Union Health Center meet with health coaches like Carrasco to better understand their chronic conditions and discuss healthier lifestyle methods.

While there has been a resurgence of interest in nutrition and wellness, many Americans suffer from chronic diseases without guidance or knowledge on how to manage it. According to a recent report, in at least 80% of chronic disease, lifestyle behaviors have proven to be a major factor.

Health coaching has emerged as a unique healthcare approach set to be a cost-efficient and accessible solution to empower chronic disease patients. The principal role of a health coach is to guide patients in becoming active participants in caring for their chronic conditions through gaining knowledge, skills, and confidence to achieve their self-identified health goals.