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40 Individuals Receive Hypertension Testing by East End Medical Center as Part of National Health Center Week

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Kyle Murphy **August 15, 2022**

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The East End Medical Center on Friday hosted an outreach event at the Catholic Charities on St. Thomas to provide hypertension testing for the homeless as part of National Health Center Week.

Director of Communications and Community Engagement for the East End Medical Center, Lisa Webster, explained that the outreach was not only aimed at hypertension awareness, but was also part of a wider effort to enroll Virgin Islanders into hypertension initiative programs.

These programs see people with hypertension being monitored by a medical provider, while also providing education on lifestyle changes needed to improve their health.

"Someone can come in, get screened and figure out what their status is, but the important part is to continue services, screening, and control," said Ms. Webster. She said Friday's outreach focused on services that help hypertension patients control their blood pressure levels.

About 40 people who attended the event had their hypertension levels evaluated by licensed practical nurses and certified medical assistants.

Asked by the Consortium about the importance of hypertension screenings in the Virgin Islands specifically, Ms. Webster explained, "In this community, it is important to know what your status is. When that happens there are other things you have to start working on: your diet, your lifestyle changes because when you don't do that we have this continuously sick community."

She further stated, "We are starting at the beginning and allowing this to grow into a lifestyle, not just something that you choose every once in a while."

Dianne Morales, graduate professional nurse and executive assistant to the medical director, expanded on the importance of hypertension testing in the Virgin Islands, pointing out that as a predominantly Black community, awareness and preventative action is even more critical compared to other groups. According to Heart.org, "About 55 percent of Black adults have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension."

"It is related to every other disease that comes after," Ms. Morales said. "When your blood pressure goes bad, your blood sugar goes bad, everything else starts to fall apart."

Ms. Webster said that while Friday's hypertension screenings were focused on clients of the Catholic Charities, the East End Medical Center hosts multiple screenings every year focused on different areas of the community.