

Tulane physicians and medical students help community learn about diabetes

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The New Orleans Diabetes Project held community classes at the Sanchez Multi-Service Center in the Lower 9th Ward.

A group of Tulane University School of Medicine students volunteered with the [New Orleans Diabetes Project](#) and helped 25 elderly people better manage their health. The project is an eight-week education program during which participants monitor their A1C levels throughout the course of the class and learn more about how to control their diabetes.

The students volunteered under the direction of [Keith C. Ferdinand, MD](#), the Gerald S. Berenson Endowed Chair in Preventive Cardiology and Professor of Medicine. Dr. Ferdinand is also the president of the [Healthy Heart Community Prevention Program](#).

“This type of community-based intervention is important to help individuals, especially our local African American citizens, manage their high cardiovascular risk in a community setting,” said Ferdinand.

The weekly meetings were held at the [Sanchez Center](#) in New Orleans’ Lower 9th Ward. Dr. Ferdinand grew up in the neighborhood and has watched it struggle to recover after two major disasters, Hurricanes Betsy and Katrina.

“Many residents have been unable to return 17 years after Katrina,” said Ferdinand. “The healthcare infrastructure remains severely damaged. We’re proud to have the assistance of the [Baptist Community Health Services](#) and [Xavier University College of Pharmacy](#), along with our Tulane medical students to help with this project.”

The program was offered at no cost to participants. The classes featured portion-controlled diabetic meals and beverages and participants were also compensated for their time and travel. Each class focused on a lesson about diabetes management. Third-year internal medicine resident Degian Ghebermical, MD, volunteered with the program and taught a course on how to better manage blood sugar.

“When you’re seeing patients in clinic, sometimes they’re afraid to ask questions,” said Ghebermical. “Being able to see people in the community, and to answer all of their questions and give personalized information to each participant, was an honor.”

[Daphne Ferdinand, PhD, RN](#), executive director of the Healthy Heart Community Prevention Program, presented the work at the [National Minority Quality Forum](#) in Washington, D.C. The program plans to hold another diabetes education course later this year.