

Effort targets high blood pressure

CHRIS SWINGLE

STAFF WRITER

Employers, health care systems and other sectors of the Rochester community say that by teaming up to attack high blood pressure, they aim to shift people's behavior, just as national efforts have tackled tobacco use.

At a press conference Wednesday, local leaders said they believe that hearing the health message from all corners will help residents and their health care providers better address high blood

pressure and avoid strokes, heart attacks and kidney disease that devastate families and drive up health care costs.

"It's a community solution to an individual problem," said Paul S. Speranza Jr., vice chairman and general counsel for Wegmans Food Markets Inc. He is leading the High Blood Pressure Collaborative Work Group, a partnership of the Rochester Business Alliance and the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency that includes 63 representatives

from 40 groups.

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is the initial focus because it's so common and leads to costly problems. The RBA's 2,100 members have consistently said that the high cost of health care is a top concern, said Sandy Parker, RBA president and chief executive.

The collaborative's first public steps include:

■ A six-minute survey — at www.rochesterbusinessalliance.com — that the public is encouraged to fill out over the next

two weeks.

■ Free blood pressure screenings this summer.

■ Collaboration among primary care offices affiliated with the three major hospital systems to better identify patients with high blood pressure and to better control the disease.

Survey responses will guide a campaign to raise awareness about the disease and to provide a call to action for people with hypertension to adopt a healthier lifestyle. □

CSWINGLE@DemocratandChronicle.com