Help Members of Your Community Thrive

Self-Management Programs Improve Lives of People with Chronic Conditions

Chronic disease takes an enormous toll on peoples' lives. It causes pain, disability, decreased physical activity, and poor emotional health, which can seriously compromise the quality of daily life. Fortunately, there are community self-help programs that can help people with chronic diseases learn how to manage symptoms and maintain active and fulfilling lives. Your organization can help people in your community thrive by offering evidence-based, self-management programs.

A Proven Public Health Strategy That Enhances Physical and Psychological Well-Being

Self-management education programs have been proven to significantly help people with chronic conditions.[1] As a complement to clinical care, these programs teach participants how to exercise properly and eat healthy, use medications appropriately, solve everyday problems, and communicate effectively with family members and health care providers—all positive life skills to enhance well-being. As a result, these interventions help participants reduce pain, depression, fear, and frustration; improve mobility and exercise; increase energy; and boost confidence in their ability to manage their condition.[1]

The Impact of Chronic Disease

- In the United States, 1 of 2 people has at least 1 chronic disease, representing 145 million Americans. Twenty-eight percent of all Americans have two or more chronic conditions.[2]
- Nationally, chronic diseases account for 75% of the $2 trillion spent on health care each year in the United States.[2]
- The most common chronic diseases include arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and stroke.
- Fifty million Americans have been diagnosed with arthritis,[3] the most common cause of disability.[4]

Two Effective Self-Management Programs

Two research studies, each combining the results of more than 20 evaluations, demonstrate the value of two highly successful self-management programs developed at Stanford University. Learn about the results from meta-analyses of these two programs at http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis ASMP-executive-summary.pdf.

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program is an educational workshop for people with chronic conditions (e.g., arthritis, diabetes, lung and heart disease). The Arthritis Self-Management Program is an educational workshop for people with arthritis—including osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and others. Both programs—

- ✓ Are designed to be taught in a community setting (e.g., senior center, church, library, hospital).
- ✓ Are offered as a 2 ½ - hour per week workshop for 6 weeks.
- ✓ Are led by trained leaders who have chronic conditions themselves, and who follow a structured leader protocol.
- ✓ Help participants learn how to take control of their chronic disease.
- ✓ Encourage interaction and mutual problem-solving and support.
- ✓ Are designed to complement clinical treatment and disease-specific education programs.
- ✓ Are available in English and Spanish.

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program also teaches skills to people managing multiple chronic conditions. Learn more about these two Stanford University programs at http://patienteducation.stanford.edu/programs.

Implement a Self-Management Workshop in Your Community

Expanding the availability of these programs will enhance the well-being of people with chronic disease and help people live the fullest life possible. Local aging services, adult education programs, health promotion and wellness programs, employers, and faith-based organizations are well positioned to provide these workshops within their communities. Consider adopting the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and the Arthritis Self-Management Program into your organization's health and wellness offerings.

Learn more about how to implement one or both of these programs in your organization at http://patienteducation.stanford.edu/programs.

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1. http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/docs/ASMP-executive-summary.pdf.
2. http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/50968chronic.care.chartbook.pdf.
3. *MMWR* 2010;59(39):1261–1265.
4. *MMWR* 2009;58(16):421-426.

Promoting Life-Changing Skills

In Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, the Stanford Chronic Disease Self-Management Program is called Better Choices, Better Health. The program focuses on the physical and mental effects of chronic disease including exercise, nutrition, fatigue, loneliness, communication, and problem-solving. Program Director John Miller noted that, along with teaching life-changing skills, one of the key components of the program is to build self-confidence. A 62-year-old participant with osteoarthritis, spinal stenosis, and diabetes once described herself as a prisoner of her pain, but after attending Better Choices, Better Health she feels she has regained the independence of her younger life. "I was living in fear and doubt of my own capabilities with my chronic diseases, but then as I took the program…I just soared." Chronic disease self-management programs such as this one in Pennsylvania are being implemented successfully in senior centers, churches, and other community settings across the country.