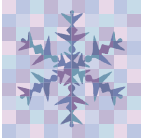


Rural Healthy Aging Network

Volume 5

December 2008

Funded by US DHHS/CDC/National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Grant No: 5 U48 DP000052-05



Greetings!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide an update on the activities of the Rural Healthy Aging Network (RHAN). If you have anything you would like to include in this newsletter, please send it to Joshua Byrd at jbyrd@hsc.wvu.edu.

Lunch and Learn Program to help Local Caregivers

The Alzheimer's Association, West Virginia Chapter will offer free monthly workshops about Alzheimer's disease and care giving in each of the three Chapter offices. Each month the workshops will cover a different topic about Alzheimer's disease and the "ins" and "outs" of caring for someone with Alzheimer's or a related dementia. Workshops will be held in Charleston, Parkersburg, and Morgantown at the Alzheimer's Association office in each of those cities. The Charleston workshop's will be held on the third Wednesday of each month and the Morgantown and Parkersburg workshops will be held the third Tuesday, all occurring at noon.

Topics will range from the basics of Alzheimer's disease to communication best practices and care planning. These workshops are designed to provide family and professional caregivers best practices and resources to aid in their care for a loved one or family member. The workshops supply a brown bag lunch and only last an hour to aid busy professionals who may be caring for a loved one at home. The workshops are free and open to the public. For more information about a Lunch and Learn program near you please contact the Alzheimer's Association, West Virginia Chapter at 1-800-491-2717 or online at www.alz.org/wv.

Advance Directives in WV

Advance directives, or a durable power of attorney for health care, allow us to properly manage the legal issues of death. A durable power of attorney allows one to appoint a person to act on their behalf they are unable to, specifically when making decisions involving health care. This document gives the opportunity to choose a person that would act in their best interests, and is only active when the person is unable to make decisions for themselves (i.e. mentally incompetent or in a coma).

When choosing a durable power of attorney, there are a few things to look for in an agent:

- Someone who understands and is willing to carry out your wishes.
- Someone emotionally prepared to handle making decisions for you.
- Someone who you believe will be available to act for you.
- Someone who will not be burdened emotionally by acting for you, preferably not a close family member.

When creating a durable power of attorney, you may choose in advance what you wish for yourself, or you may discuss your options with your agent and they may make the decisions themselves based on your best interests. Either way, it is important to discuss your feelings towards advanced directives and wishes for your own health care with your agent, family, friends, and doctor. It is suggested that your doctor has a copy of the durable power of attorney, as well as family members and perhaps your lawyer.

When discussing advanced directives be prepared for family members and even doctors to be unwilling to take part in the discussion. It is important that you make clear the topic is important to you and discuss what you feel is in your best interests should you be unable to make decisions for yourself.

Forms to assist you with advance directives are available at <http://www.wvethics.org/>.

Lorig et al. *Living a Health Life with Chronic Conditions*. Boulder, CO: Bull Publishing Company, 2006.

West Virginia Caregivers Website Provides Valuable Information

The West Virginia Caregivers website, WVCaregivers.org, is a fairly extensive product of the West Virginia University Center on Aging. The website is an online resource providing support, assistance and services to West Virginia caregivers and their families. It offers a broad array of information, including interactive maps for local services, links to online resources, and a chat and discussion board.

Dr. R. Turner Goins, PhD and staff maintain the website and that was initially funded by the Benedum Foundation.

From a request from Laura Quinnelly of the WV Higher Education Policy Commission, a proposal to update and possibly expand the site was sent to Senator John Unger by the WV Higher Education Policy Commission and R. Turner Goins. The site is a good resource to support the Senator's long-term care efforts. A meeting was set for late October to discuss this proposal and at this time we have no information on the outcome of that meeting.

Suggestions and comments for the WVCaregivers.org site are welcomed and may be sent to Joshua Byrd at jbyrd@hsc.wvu.edu.

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) Annual Meeting

The GSA annual meeting will be held in National Harbor, MD from November 21-25. The theme of the 2008 Annual Scientific Meeting is "Resilience in an Aging Society: Risks and Opportunities."

Dr. R. Turner Goins, Dr. Bei Wu, Joshua Byrd, and Stephanie Frost of the WVU Center on Aging will present at the annual meeting. The presentations from our faculty and staff include:

- Assistive Technology Use among Older American Indians: The Native Elder Care Study. *R.T. Goins, S. Spencer, J. Rogers*

- Depression and Health Problems among Chinese Immigrant Elders in the U.S. and Chinese Elders in China. *B. Wu, I. Chi, B. Plassman, M. Guo*
- Effects of the Built Environment on Physical Activity of Adults Living in Rural Settings: A Review of the Literature. *R.T. Goins, S. Frost*
- Does Socioeconomic Status Explain Ethnic Disparities In Oral Health? *B. Wu, B. Plassman, J. Liang, R. Crout*
- Implementing an Evidence-Based Exercise Program in Rural West Virginia: Fit and Strong! *R.T. Goins, J. Byrd*
- A Qualitative Study of Older Adults' Concerns about Cognitive Health in Aging: A Foundation for Health Promotion. *R. Liu; J. Laditka; S. Laditka; S. Corwin; S. Wilcox; A. Mathews; B. Wu; L. Bryant; R. Hunter; J. Sharkey; D. Fetterman*
- Resilience Among Older American Indians: The Native Elder Care Study. *R.T. Goins, S. Frost.*
- Stages of Change for Exercise: The Native Elder Care Study. *S. Frost, R.T. Goins, S. Studenski, E. Goedereis*

For more information on the meeting or to find a list of presentations, visit www.geron.org.

WVGEC Upcoming Events

The WVGEC is sponsoring Health Literacy in Older Adults training on January 29 - 31, 2009. There was some very positive feedback from the training that was held last year. Four trainees addressed the WV Geriatric Society Annual Conference and shared how they had incorporated what they learned into their practices and teaching.

Also, the WVGEC will be co-sponsoring AGES (Advanced Geriatrics Educators Skills) training that leads to certification. AGES will be held on March 20-21, 2009 in Beckley. We would appreciate all the help in getting the word out about these events.