

Wisconsin**Communities Promote “Physical Activity. The Arthritis Pain Reliever” Campaign Across Urban, Rural, and Minority Populations****Public Health Problem**

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the United States. According to the 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 27% of all Wisconsin adults and 57% of individuals 65 and older self-report doctor-diagnosed arthritis. Forty percent of those with arthritis are also obese, a modifiable risk factor. Research supports that physical activity plays a role in improving function, delaying disability, and reducing pain and symptoms related to arthritis. Physical activity is also essential to weight management, which is shown to lower risk for osteoarthritis (OA), assist in managing OA-related pain and maintain or improve physical functioning.

Taking Action

Since October 2001, and with CDC support, the Wisconsin Arthritis Program has sponsored an arthritis health communication campaign developed by CDC. The campaign aims to promote the importance of physical activity for arthritis pain management, to motivate people to begin a physical activity program, and to increase awareness of available evidence-based physical activity classes that decrease the symptoms of arthritis. Using a social marketing approach, the main objectives of the campaign are to: 1) increase awareness; 2) change attitudes; and 3) change behavior through the use of full print and radio media tools. The Wisconsin Arthritis Program further enhances campaign messages through community events, seminars, and systems-level changes.

In partnership with local agencies, the Wisconsin Arthritis Program has chosen to implement the health communication campaign in each of the state’s five regions, with the final region (northeast) planned for May 2008. Communities included: urban Milwaukee, which focuses on the African American and Latino communities; the City of Beloit, which has a racially and ethnically diverse population; and rural Oneida and Chippewa Counties. The campaign has proved adaptable to these vastly different communities. An especially important factor is making the campaign universally engaging to local health care professionals, clinics, fitness facilities, parks and recreation, and other community resources to encourage participation and support of the campaign message and events. The campaign’s overarching message of modifying behavior to include appropriate physical activity and remain active is coupled with a nurturing community environment that supports this message.

Implications and Impact

Recognizing that health communication campaigns are effective ways to reach a large number of individuals, the Wisconsin Arthritis Program has developed a model for this social marketing intervention to increase awareness, change behaviors, and provide systems development for improving access to evidence-based self management education and physical activity programs.