

Maryland

Improving Quality of Life for People With Arthritis, Partnering With a Faith-Based Organization

Public Health Problem

Arthritis is one of the most common health problems in the United States, with 49 million adults having doctor-diagnosed arthritis in 2001—nearly 1 of every 4 adults. An additional 21 million Americans reported chronic joint symptoms. In Maryland, 865,000 adults reported doctor-diagnosed arthritis in 2001, and an additional 326,000 adults reported chronic joint symptoms.

Program Example

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is partnering with the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church (BWCUMC) and the Maryland Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation to improve quality of life for people with arthritis. The BWCUMC has 210,000 members in 702 churches in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and West Virginia. The three organizations aim to make people more aware of arthritis and improve their access to effective physical activity and self-management interventions in communities. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene had an exhibit at the BWCUMC's annual convention, where more than 2,000 members attended in June 2003. The *United Methodist Connection*, a newspaper of the BWCUMC, is publishing articles to increase people's awareness and knowledge about arthritis. In addition, the Maryland Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation is providing speakers for a series of workshops to increase public awareness and knowledge of available programs and services to help people with arthritis become active partners in the management of their disease. The workshops will be promoted through *E-Connection*, an e-mail communication to BWCUMC members that provides news, notices, and reminders. To meet anticipated demand for these arthritis programs and services, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Arthritis Foundation, Maryland Chapter will train leaders for two programs: People with Arthritis Can Exercise (PACE[®]) and the Arthritis Self-Help Course. Both programs are proven effective in reducing the effects of arthritis.

Implications and Impact

In Maryland, only 13% of adults with arthritis have participated in arthritis education, self-help courses, or physical activity programs. More widespread use of these proven interventions could improve quality of life for people with arthritis and reduce both direct and indirect medical costs. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has partnered with a faith-based organization to expand the reach of these programs. This partnership can serve as a model for other states wanting to expand programs to reach people with arthritis, especially minority populations.

Contact Information

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