

Diabetes Risk Intervention Study Concludes Pilot

Making the Connection Healthy Living Program, the IPRC core research study, has completed its pilot stage. Two small groups of Greater Lawn residents who have participated in the year-long study are celebrating achievements of weight loss and healthier habits, while the research team is integrating the study participants' feedback and the lessons learned over the course of the pilot into plans for the full-scale study, which will begin this spring.

Two groups of overweight adults participated in this test-drive of Making the Connection, which promotes healthy eating and physical activity to reduce the risk for diabetes among African Americans and Latinos. The study participants met weekly for 16 weeks and then monthly for follow-up support sessions, all under the guidance of Making the Connection coaches, who are neighborhood residents specially trained for the program. The research team's aim for this pilot stage was to work out the kinks of the program, which had never been offered in a group setting, as well as to help participants lose weight and avoid diabetes.

Traci Newton, whose parents died from diabetes complications, said she has lost weight and begun exercising regularly, four days each week for an hour, since she started the program.

"It was pretty hard, but I did it," said Ms. Newton. "I do all



Making the Connection Healthy Living Program concluded its year-long pilot study with celebrations. Some members of the Latino pilot group display their certificates of program completion at their party with program leaders on February 22.

kinds of exercise now. I ride my bike, and walk with my husband," she said.

Making the Connection adapts the individual-centered lifestyle intervention of the Diabetes Prevention Program, a national

study that reduced diabetes among adults at high risk for the disease, for use in a community group. In the sessions, coaches teach principles of reducing fat

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IPRC Develops New Partnerships

IPRC researchers are developing new partnerships with community institutions as the Making the Connection Healthy Living Program prepares for its full-scale study. Edward N. Hurley Elementary School and Metropolitan Family Services are helping IPRC to educate community members about diabetes and provide meeting space for Healthy Living Program sessions.

The National Kidney Foundation of Illinois also is assisting with recruitment for the study. Using its KidneyMobile, the organization is offering free screen-

ings for diabetes and kidney disease at several sites in the Greater Lawn community this spring. Community residents who are found to be without diabetes and who meet other criteria will be invited to participate in the study.

Untreated diabetes is one of the primary causes of kidney disease, and African Americans and Latinos are at especially high risk.

IPRC is working to establish other partnerships with schools, churches, and other organizations in southwest Chicago.

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—Adriana Morales

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and calorie intake and eating more fruits and vegetables and increasing physical activity. In practice, they found that the development of a supportive group helped that participants achieve their goals.

Andrea Hood, the leader of Ms. Newton's pilot group, said the success of participants in her group was due to their sense of teamwork. "We were a team. We helped each other lose weight and gain confidence," she said.

Making the Connection pilot study participants were overweight African American and Latino adults who did not have diabetes. All lived in West Lawn, Chicago Lawn, and Gage Park in southwest Chicago, in which IPRC has been working since 1999. Participants in the full-scale study will be recruited from this area and meet similar criteria.

Pilot study sessions were held at Holy Cross Hospital, 2701 W. 68th St. Sessions for the full-scale

study also will be held at the hospital as well as at schools and community organizations.

The research team found ways to strengthen the program as they offered it. Pilot group leaders saw the program go beyond

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its original goals of increasing physical activity and improving dietary habits to create a supportive community, said group leader Adriana Morales.

"You get involved in people's lives and become bonded," Ms. Morales said. Because group leaders saw these positive effects, she said, they extended the one-hour sessions to allow more time for support.

The research team also organized sessions to address participants' special interests related to healthy habits and invited guest speakers from the community. For example, a local shoe store owner discussed how to select athletic shoes that offer good support.

Now that the pilot groups have finished, the research team is preparing for the full-scale study, which will include 200 participants from Greater Lawn and begin this spring.

"I'm excited to apply what we've learned from the participants and coaches as we move into the full-scale study," says the project's lead researcher, Laurie Ruggiero, professor of community health sciences.

Ten new coaches, who were recruited from local health care and community organizations in Greater Lawn, completed a total of 20 training hours on the Healthy Living Program curriculum.

Joseph Day, a doctoral candidate in public health, has been working with the coaches and will help them recruit community members into the study.

"Coaches are the true bridges to the community. They are the most important part of the project because they can reach people most effectively," said Mr. Day.

Educating the community about the risk of diabetes is one of the goals of the research team as it works in the community. The research team has pursued this in several ways.

They have developed partnerships with organizations in the community, beginning with the Latino Organization of the Southwest, which has partnered with the IPRC for seven years, and Holy Cross Hospital, a major healthcare provider in the area. The program has recruited several additional community partners who will provide meeting space, donate goods or services, and help promote the program for the full-scale study.

"Working with new partners in the community is a great way to get the word out that diabetes is preventable," explains Dr. Ruggiero.

The research team also shared diabetes prevention information at their booth at the IPRC-hosted community wellness fair in November and in a community forum last September.



Pilot study participant Traci Newton changed her lifestyle through the Making the Connection Healthy Living Program.

Annual Community Wellness Fair



More than 1,000 health screenings and services were provided by over 50 community-based health providers and social service agencies at the 2006 Community Wellness Fair, held in November at Marquette Park. The annual event, held in partnership with the Latino Organization of the Southwest and Holy Cross Hospital, drew more than 700 community residents.

Study Aims to Improve Diabetes Self-Management

The National Institute of Nursing Research has awarded \$3 million to an IPRC researcher for a five-year study of a new approach to improve how people with diabetes take care of their condition.

In the study, diabetes patients will receive support from specially trained, certified medical assistants in addition to the care they receive from their doctors and other health care providers. Such medical assistants will reinforce and support the lessons patients have learned about how to live with diabetes, such as the importance of healthy eating, physical activity, testing their blood sugar and taking medication.

The study will consider whether patients who work with such coaches manage their condition better and are healthier than other patients with diabetes.

"This is an innovative approach to diabetes self-management education, and we are excited to learn about working with medical assistants," said Laurie Ruggiero, the lead researcher and UIC professor of community health sciences.

Dr. Ruggiero is working with physicians at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Access Community Health Network and the Mount Sinai health System to conduct the study.

Recent studies suggest that educating individuals with diabetes about how they can best manage the conditions can improve their health and behavior.

An estimated 20.8 million people, or 7.0% of the U.S. population, have diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Register for SHAPE Walk



Virginia McCaskey, owner of the Chicago Bears, will lead the eighth annual Senior Health Alliance Promoting Exercise (SHAPE) Walk on Wednesday, May 30, 2007, at Chicago's Solider Field.

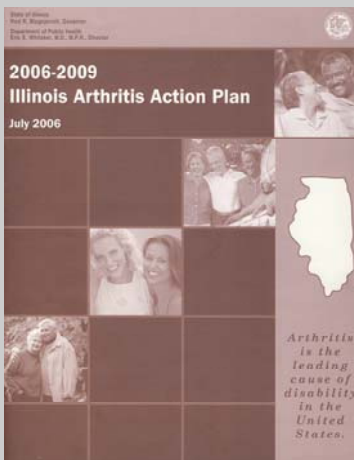
A few thousand older adults are expected to walk the three-mile route along Chicago's lakefront. Pre-registration costs \$7 and on-site registration, \$10. The fee includes admission to a health fair, live music, lunch, and a T-shirt.

Sign up for the walk, volunteer or become a sponsor at the event's website at www.SHAPEChicago.com.

The event is supported in part by the Midwest Roybal Center for Health Promotion and Behavior Change, funded by the National Institute on Aging.

IPRC Researchers' Activities around the State

The Illinois Prevention Research Center (IPRC) is examining perceptions of cardiovascular disease in diverse populations. As one of six collaborating partners of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **Cardiovascular Health Intervention Network**, the center is conducting focus groups of underserved Latino populations in rural and urban areas of Illinois. The information about perceptions among different populations will provide preliminary data for further grant funding, guide discussion, and provide direction for the planning process.



The IPRC hosted the semiannual conference of the **Illinois Arthritis Initiative** in October 2006. The conference saw the release of the state's second five-year arthritis action plan, which emphasizes the needs of underserved adults with arthritis, especially those who are minorities, rural residents, uninsured,

or underinsured. Karen Peters, assistant professor of health policy and administration, evaluated the plans' development.

Peters also is evaluating the implementation of the newest **Illinois oral health plan**. Peters and IPRC researcher William Baldyga have worked with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Division of Oral Health, the IFLOSS Coalition, the UIC College of Dentistry, and other statewide partners for more than six years, evaluating the implementation of the previous plan and the development of this new one. A draft of the new five-year plan, the state's second, was released at a statewide summit in November 2006. It focuses on improving access to oral health services in underserved urban and rural populations across the state.

Baldyga also worked with the IDPH and the Chicago Patient Safety Forum to organize the **Governor's Patient Safety Summit**, which was held at the University of Illinois at Chicago on October 16, 2006. The summit drew more than 165 health care providers and public health officials from across the state and created an agenda for patient safety activities for the state health department. IPRC director Susan J. Curry delivered the summit's introductory address.

Fit and Strong! Program Improves Arthritis Symptoms



An exercise program designed by Susan L. Hughes reduces pain and stiffness in older adults with arthritis.

Older adults who used Fit and Strong!, an exercise program designed by an IPRC researcher, steadily reduced their symptoms of arthritis and maintained their commitment to exercise one year after the program ended, according to a recent study.

Older adults who participated in the eight-week program and then followed a personalized exercise plan for one year reported continued improvement of pain and stiffness in major joints. They also increased the amount of oxygen used by their muscles, a key indicator of physical fitness.

"Arthritis is the number one cause of disability among older adults," said Susan L. Hughes, professor of community health sciences and the program's designer. "People with arthritis who exercise are more likely to maintain their overall health and independent living."

Fit and Strong! combines stretching, fitness walking, and strength training with education to maintain lifestyle change. Studies have reported positive effects of these individual exercise components but together, Dr. Hughes says, they are more effective.

The report was published in the December 2006 issue of *The Gerontologist*.

The study was conducted at five Chicago Department on Aging senior centers.

After completing Fit and Strong!, 250 older adults joined the department's award-winning fitness program and a second group of 236 older adults followed a personal exercise plan that was developed with a fitness instructor. Dr. Hughes and her colleagues will track both groups for 24 months.

Dr. Hughes said colleagues around the country have expressed interest in Fit and Strong!, so she and her colleague Rachel Seymour have begun training fitness instructors to use the program.

Fit and Strong! is now operating in Raleigh, N.C., and McDowell County, W.Va. These sites also will collect data using common measures to assess the program's impact across populations, settings and geographic areas.

Dr. Hughes directs IPRC participation in the Healthy Aging Research Network, a program within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Prevention Research Centers Program.

Anyone interested in being trained to use the program should contact Dr. Hughes at shughes@uic.edu.

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To reduce disparities in health by studying approaches to promote healthful behaviors and prevent disease across the lifespan; to conduct this research in partnership with communities across Illinois; to share findings and best practices locally and nationally; and to improve the practice of public health through training and education.

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