

Westside Health Authority and Physical Therapy: Increasing Understanding to Promote Health

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Summary of Proposed Project

Background and Purpose: The Westside Health Authority (WHA) and Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences (PTHMS) have had an emerging relationship since 2004. The purpose of this project is to expand this relationship to meet the health care needs of the WHA community as well as provide additional learning opportunities for PTHMS physical therapist (PT) students and faculty.

Participants & Methods: WHA community members with previous community-based participatory research (CBPR) experience (called Health Advocates) will be contacted by WHA principal investigators (PIs) to assist in the development of focus group interview guides and recruitment of focus group participants to discuss attitudes toward physical activity and exercise (PA&E) among older adults. Health Advocates will also assist in class discussions with PT students related to the delivery of health care in a county hospital.

Data Analysis: Transcribed audiotapes from community focus groups will be analyzed using qualitative methods. The analysis process will include community members and all PIs. Feedback from students and faculty participating in the class discussions will be collected and reviewed.

Expected Outcomes: The partnership between WHA and PTHMS will deepen as Health Advocates learn more about the PT's role in promoting health and wellness. PTHMS students will learn about the views of people experiencing health disparities. The PTHMS project investigators will also learn how to apply CBPR principles and use their expertise to address the community's health care needs.

Sharing the Findings: Results from older adult focus groups will be disseminated via open community meetings and the WHA newsletter. Outcomes from the student-Health Advocate discussions will be presented at a PTHMS curriculum meeting.

Future Plans and Sustainability: 1) Secure funding to plan and implement PA&E interventions in the community based on focus group findings; 2) Institutionalize Health Advocate involvement in the PTHMS curriculum.