UA Center on Aging works to improve care for aging AI/AN

The number of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) age 65 years and older is expected to triple by 2050, and access to high quality geriatric care is needed.

Representatives from five Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Programs who currently serve tribal nations met in Tucson in October to share and learn new ways to improve the care of older AI/ANs. At the table were representatives from the Alaska, Arizona, Los Angeles, North Carolina and Wyoming GWEPs, as well as experts from the Indian Health Service, Banner Alzheimer’s Institute, and the National Indian Council on Aging.

The collaborative meeting, funded by the GWEP-Coordinating Center Small Networking Meeting Grants Program, provided a forum for each GWEP to present their current successes and challenges, and identify opportunities for future collaborations.

The members identified promising practices for AI/AN health systems transformation as well as a promising Toolkit for caregiver education. Sharing our evolving knowledge about these system-level frameworks and disseminating our shared knowledge will help shape future AI/AN community collaborations to improve geriatric care.

Improving geriatric care in AI/AN communities across the U.S. is critically needed. Our consortium will continue to focus on this need by streamlining research/education efforts, and extending capacities to those outside of the GWEP network.

Home-based primary care expands geriatric reach

House calls are making a comeback, delivering primary care at home to vulnerable older adults and their families. A key activity of the AZ-GWEP includes training interdisciplinary home care teams in geriatric principles of care to ensure that seriously ill and disabled adults receive the best of care. In recognition of our house call expertise, the Arizona Center on Aging was recently named one of 8 national centers of excellence (COE) by the Home Centered Care Institute (HCCI), a Chicago-based non profit dedicated to building the interprofessional house call workforce. The designation positions the AZ-GWEP as a national leader in educating providers to implement interdisciplinary home-based primary care. It also leverages and synergizes the Center’s work educating interdisciplinary primary care teams about geriatrics, and transforming the health care system through the HRSA-funded Geriatrics GWEP grant.

The goal of the HCCI initiative is to...
AZ-GWEP educates frontline Hopi staff

As part of the ongoing mission to reach interdisciplinary primary care teams across the state, the AZ-GWEP developed new partnerships with two groups of Hopi Tribal service providers in northern Arizona — the Hopi Community Health Representatives and Hopi Senior Services staff.

In November, the AZ-GWEP provided the groups a 2-hour training on common changes with aging, and strategies to support older adults and foster resilience in the face of these changes.

Hosted at the Hopi Wellness Center, the training incorporated hands-on simulation activities with mini lectures, group discussions and reference to Care Partner sheets—a series of educational resource sheets developed by the AZ-GWEP for paid and unpaid care partners of older adults.

“I love how you had visuals and hands on activities to give us a sense of how our aging population is faced with various environmental and personal struggles,” said Joyce Hamilton, Hopi Community Health Representative Program Manager. “The training motivated me in many ways. I’m excited to have more learning opportunities for our staff.”

AZ-GWEP faculty have been invited back to the Hopi Nation to provide their curriculum “Dementia Conversations,” which provides CHWs and other Care Partners with language and tools to raise awareness and educate community members about dementia.

Resources for providers, caregivers expanded under AZ-GWEP

Get “just in time” information on geriatric syndromes, conditions and issues from single-page, high impact and FREE Elder Care and Care Partner sheets.

Elder Care provider sheets are written for health professionals and students, such as physicians, pharmacists, nurses and social workers.

Care Partner pages are written for community health workers, certified nursing assistants, home health aides, and patients. They are available in English and Spanish.

Elder Care and Care Partner are available on our website: www.aging.arizona.edu. They are also available through regular email dissemination.

To sign up go to: https://is.gd/arizonaGWEP.

We are grateful for funding from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, HRSA Arizona Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Center (GEC) grant, and AZ-GWEP to be able to develop and expand this product.