



Healthy Aging Research Network (HAN) University of Colorado HAN Member Center (CU-HAN)

Project Information Sheet - October 2004

Project overview

The Healthy Aging Research Network (HAN) brings together researchers from eight of the Prevention Research Centers (PRC). Created in 2001 and recently refunded through 2009, HAN conducts research and disseminates results of that research to understand determinants of healthy aging, identify interventions that promote healthy aging, and translate the research into sustainable community-based programs. HAN members began by defining a healthy aging prevention research agenda. Focusing first on physical activity, HAN has to date produced state-of-the-knowledge reviews of existing research; a survey of physical activity facilities and programs in local partner communities, with related printed guides; and the pilot test of a community environmental audit tool to identify barriers to physical activity. Nutrition and depression will join physical activity as primary topics of research and dissemination during the new funding cycle. HAN's state- and national-level community activities include collaboration with public health and aging services networks to promote healthy aging practices and policies.

Why? A description of the health problem

- There are more older people alive today than at any other time in human history.
- Older adults (age65+) represented about 12% of the U.S. population in 2000 (12.8% of the SLV population); the proportion is expected to increase to nearly 20% by 2030.
- The prevalence of chronic disease and disability increases with older age, with associated economic and social costs.

Potential areas of HAN research concerning older adults and healthy aging

- Interactive effects of socio-ecological factors that influence healthy aging, including ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic characteristics of individuals, communities, and physical, social and political environments
- Barriers and facilitators for diverse groups of older adults to engage in healthy behaviors
- Methods and models to foster participatory community leadership in health promotion research and programs
- Methods for successful translation of evidence-based interventions into communities

Community participation

SLV community team members provide advice, support, and knowledge of the needs of older adults and existing resources in their various Valley communities. Their specific activities include developing dissemination materials and methods, identifying research areas, developing ideas and projects to include in grant proposals, identifying appropriate sites for environmental audits and other surveys, and contributing to pilot applications of physical activity (and ultimately other) interventions.

Benefits of the project

- Older adults will benefit from information and evidence-based interventions that promote healthy aging.
- Senior service providers will gain access to information and programs that benefit their clients.
- The community will gain access to information and programs that benefit all older adults.
- SLV community team members and their university colleagues will gain experience and knowledge in participatory research and the development and evaluation of interventions.

CU-HAN SLV Community Committee

Lucinda (Cindy) Bryant PhD MSHA (CU-HAN team leader), Elaine Belansky, PhD (RMPRC), Sandra Blevins (Alamosa senior center), Dan Gutierrez (Area Agency on Aging), Gilbert Medina (Alamosa senior housing), Sue Stephenson (La Jara senior center), Elaine Trujillo-Sanchez (Del Norte senior housing). The team is currently identifying additional community members.

Funding

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For more information about this project, please contact Lucinda (Cindy) Bryant at 303/825-0851 or lucinda.bryant@uchsc.edu.