

Dear Chronic Care work group,

I would like to provide some support for evidence-based programs in assisting in the management of chronic care for older adults receiving Medicare. I received an appeal from the A Matter of Balance organization to write to this work group, and decided that I might be able to do some good by sending my own letter of support for evidence-based programming.

I am a certified instructor in the following evidence-based programs,

1. A Matter of Balance - strength, balance, and educational group discussion in reducing fear of falling for older adults.
2. Healthy Steps in Motion - strength, cardio and balance training for older adults proven to reduce the risk of falls.
3. Dr. Paul Lam's Tai Chi for Health programs, (both Tai Chi for Arthritis, and Tai Chi for Beginner's) - evidence-based to improve many aspects of health and wellness for many age groups. In particular older adults come to my classes with an interest in balance improvement, and arthritis pain reduction, which the program has been proven to aid in.

Having taught these programs for over 3 years I have found them to be wonderful for older adults to take charge of their own health and wellness management. I strongly believe that these programs and other evidence-based programs are an excellent and cost effective way to supplement chronic health care management in the older adult population.

We should be promoting all of our citizens taking control of their own health and wellness. Instructors do their part by teaching these programs, but we need the support of the medical community and this committee to get the word out. Health and wellness are not just something for our doctors to take over completely, we must support and take control of our own well-being for the most complete care management possible. With support the creators of these programs, and the instructors who faithfully teach them can make a larger difference in promoting health in a cost effective way.

It should be noted that each of the classes that I teach are made available to participants for little to no cost to them through senior center and YMCA support. Most YMCA's make programming available for just the cost of a monthly membership which varies depending on income. Also, senior centers often times have programming available for a small donation to a minimal cost depending on the program.

Here are just a few small examples of the differences I have noticed with participants after beginning one of my programs. I have seen the difference in many participants after just a short time taking my classes. A simple technique like proper deep breathing, which is covered in all three of the programs I teach can alone teach individuals to relax their body/minds, reduce their blood pressure and stress, and improve their wellness.

This is something that a family medical doctor often times would not take the time to do during a visit, and yet it is a profound way to improve wellness without cost, or much time investment. A class participant can practice this method just a few minutes a day and see improvements, making it accessible for people wanting to take charge of wellness. An instructor in this type of program need not be a doctor or health care professional to teach such a simple yet effective technique. Participants are always encouraged to speak to their health care professional regarding any concerns they have however, and to always speak to their health care professional before beginning a new exercise program.

To provide another short example, I see a large difference in balance ability after just a short time of

doing balance specific exercises in almost EVERY participant in my tai chi classes. There is a particular exercise I used to gauge improvements, and after my most recent 10 week introductory course, almost all participants could effectively do this exercise better than they could earlier in the course. In this class I had many participants struggling with even the modification, yet after 10 weeks I noted that most people were successfully doing the full version of the exercise. This is a measurable progress, and just one example of many.

I've been pleased to hear prospective participants, especially of my tai chi classes have been encouraged to attend class through their family health care professional. I think it would be wonderful to have more support for these programs in a more official capacity. People need to be encouraged to take back control of their own health care management, and evidence-based programs are a simple, effective, and cost effective way to do this.

Please consider adding more support for evidence-based exercise, and wellness programs to your agenda.

My hope is that this work group would see the value in evidence-based programming in reducing costs for chronic care management, while improving the health and wellness of our older adult population in fall reduction, arthritis pain, improvements in strength, confidence and more. The classroom environment also provides needed support from others in the goal of improved health, which is an added benefit of these programs.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my small letter of support for evidence-based programming for the older adult population in health improvements for chronic care management.

Sincerely,

Marci Roth