

BRIDGES

GERIATRIC / ADULT SPECIALTY TEAM
Bimonthly Newsletter

Connecting caregivers with training and consultation for the mental health needs of older adults

July/August

2017

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FIND COMMUNITY RESOURCES QUICKLY

NC211.org

There are hundreds of health, human service and other helpful organizations listed for nearly any kind of need. Simply dial 2-1-1 any time of day or visit www.NC211.org to find the help you need.

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

Stay up to date on events, news and information about Trillium Health Resources and how we work to Transform Lives!



by Kimberly Williams, MSW, LCSW

There is a lot of conversation and awareness in the media about the opioid epidemic facing our nation. When we hear opioid addiction, we often think about teens and young adults buying them illegally on the street from shady dealers. The truth is, people of all ages are being affected by this epidemic and older adults pose an increasing risk.

In a [study](#) performed by the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Duke University Medical Center, it was found that although non-prescription use of prescription pain relievers is relatively uncommon among the elderly population, the much higher use among middle aged adults suggests that as this cohort ages, the problem may also increase. For older adults, opioid misuse and abuse can occur in many different ways. Some of the most common ways include being prescribed opioids for chronic pain that comes with aging, using more than prescribed due to the added stress and fatigue from caring for grandchildren of drug abusing parents, and poor management of prescribed medications (i.e. leaving them where others can easily steal them or forgetting if they have taken their medications).

As the population of older Americans increase, individuals over the age of 50 are using narcotic pain medications in rising numbers and many are becoming addicted. Consider these facts: according to AARP, almost 1/3 of all Medicare patients - 12 million people - were prescribed opioid pain medications in 2015; in 2015 2.7 million Americans over age 50 abused pain medications; and the hospitalization rate due to opioid abuse for those 65 and older has quintupled in the past two decades.

For older adults, sometimes it can be a little harder to detect if there is a problem with opioid use. As we age, our cognitive abilities may change. We are more at risk for falls that result in serious injuries, developing dementia and other vascular diseases which can cause cognitive issues increase, and sleep cycles may become disrupted causing frequent "napping". Often times as these changes occur, many older adults do not manage opioid and other prescription medications properly and the result is overuse and addiction.

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Another contributing factor to opioid abuse among the elderly that is not talked about is *attitude*. How many times have you heard someone say, “Well they are old and we don’t want them to be in pain so give them whatever helps”? Additionally, some doctors do not ask the right questions, completely understand what may be going on with the older adult, or explain medications and their side effects so it is understood. With minimal and misunderstood dialogue, the chances of exploring options beyond prescription medications decreases. Many times, asking the right questions in a way that the individual understands it can reduce the instance of prescribing these types of medications.

Lastly, it is important to mention that the number of older adults that have resorted to selling their opioid medications to supplement their income is on the rise. This is evidence based by reports from law enforcement agencies across the nation as well as a review of court cases that indicate an increasing number of older adults with drug charges. Finally, for individuals with cognitive issues and/or dementia they may forget to take or take too many of a medication or be easy targets for individuals to get their medications.

Please visit our Trillium website at www.trilliumhealthresources.org/for-individuals-families for more information and resources on Opioid Use and Treatment.

Below is some additional local agency resources.

Your local (Area Agency on Aging) AAA

Area Agency on Aging	Contact Number	Counties Covered
Mid-East Commission - Region Q	252-974-1838	Beaufort, Herford, Pitt, Bertie, Martin
Albemarle Commission - Region R	252-426-5753	Camden, Currituck, Gates, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, Washington, Chowan, Dare, Hyde
Eastern Carolina Council - Region P	252-638-3185	Carteret, Duplin, Jones, Onslow, Craven, Pamlico, Wayne, Lenoir, Greene
Cape Fear Council of Government - Region O	910-395-4553	Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Pender
Upper Coastal Plains Council of Government - Region L	252-234-5963	Nash, Northampton, Edgecombe, Halifax, Wilson

The AAA may provide Home and Community Based Services, Family Caregiver Support, Program C.A.R.E., Long Term Care Ombudsman, Nutrition, and other supportive services. Contact your local AAA for information regarding services they provide.

- Local Department of Social Services for Adult Protective Services, Medicaid, Nutrition Assistance and other program that might be available to assist older adults.
- Alzheimer’s NC 800-228-8738
- Check with your local Sheriff’s Department for “check in” programs they may offer
- Senior Centers in each county - exercise programs, congregate meal site, activities

Should Older Adults Protect their Skin from the Sun?

by Frankie Glance, Administrative Assistant



We have all heard that protecting skin from the sun will help prevent premature aging. But what if you're older? Is there any point in worrying about sun damage? Since July is UV Safety Month, not to mention a time when we are all enjoying the early summer sun, *according to Griswold Home Care*, now is a great time to talk about this question..

People in their 60s may not be as concerned about keeping their skin looking young, as are people in their 20s and 30s. But that does not mean that older adults should stop wearing sunscreen or worrying about sun damage. In fact, a 2009 study revealed that older skin is less capable of protecting itself from skin cancer. The study showed how the skin of older adults had a diminished ability to attract a certain type of immune cells called T cells to damaged areas where repairs were needed. This means the skin did not heal as well, leaving the person more vulnerable to infections and skin cancer.

As we age, the skin becomes more delicate and vulnerable increasing the importance for older adults to protect their skin from damage caused by the sun. Older adults need to take special precautions to limit their sun exposure as much as possible. Here are some tips for keeping your skin safe and healthy:

- **Do not get a tan.** A tan is your skin's signal that damage has been done (a sunburn, even more so). Older adults have already sustained decades of sun damage. Tans and sunburns increase your risk of developing skin cancer, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. So, if you've already been burned a few times in your life—or worse, used to tan regularly when you were younger, take special care to stay out of the sun.
- **Seek out shade.** Protecting yourself from the sun doesn't mean you can never go outside. Use a sunshade or umbrella at the beach or pool, and stick to shady porches if you are enjoying an afternoon outside at home or having an al fresco lunch.
- **Know when to stay inside.** According to the American Academy of Dermatology, the sun's rays are strongest in North America between 10am and 4pm. Take special care to stay inside or in a shaded area during these hours.
- **Make sunscreen a part of your daily routine.** Even a short walk to and from the car, or passing by sunny windows while indoors can expose your skin to dangerous UV rays. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends using sunscreen of SPF 30 on any exposed skin every day, whether you will be inside or out.
- **Wear protective clothing.** Loose, lightweight long pants and long sleeved shirts offer ideal sun protection for older adults because they do not have to be reapplied like sunscreen. Make sure they have a tight weave so the sun's rays cannot sneak through. Top them off with a wide-brimmed hat. If you plan to spend time outdoors, look for clothing specially designed to offer UV protection. Also, look for UV-blocking sunglasses, window shades and car window tints.
- **Use moisturizer.** As skin ages, it becomes more prone to dryness and often made worse by sun damage. Keep skin moist with a lotion or cream to help protect it.

Though some people assume that older adults do not need to worry about sun damage, it is extremely important for older adults to protect their delicate skin.



JULY IS SOCIAL WELLNESS MONTH

by Ruthie Fredrick, BSW, QP

Social wellness refers to the ability to interact with people around you. It involves using good communication skills, having meaningful relationships, respecting yourself and others, and creating a support system that includes family members and friends. The social dimension of wellness involves developing, nourishing, and encouraging satisfying relationships.

Social wellness is one of the eight dimensions of wellness, which also includes emotional, financial, physical, and spiritual wellness. Social wellness is an important aspect of good mental health, although each aspect of wellness can affect overall quality of life.

July is considered Social Wellness Month. It's a good time to take a step back and look at the connections you've made in your life. For seniors, staying socially active can be just as effective as exercise at improving your mood and quality of life. Use this month to develop some new friendships and get reacquainted with those you may have lost touch with. Research shows that socially isolated people are more susceptible to illness and have a death rate two to three times higher than those who maintain good social relationships.

Some good ways to improve your own social wellness this month include:

- **Talk to a friend.** Call or visit someone you may not have spoken to in a while. Encourage a positive interaction by really listening to find out what is important or what issues the person has been facing. Practice empathy by putting yourself in the person's shoes.
- **Know your needs.** Get to know your own personal needs and find people who can help nurture those needs. While pursuing your own needs, help others with theirs. Talk to people who are supportive of your needs.
- **Allow others to care for you.** Sometimes it can be difficult to admit when there's something you can no longer accomplish on your own. When you need assistance with something, even if it's just going to the grocery store or doing household chores, allow the people who care about you to help you. There's no shame in admitting you can't do it all on your own.
- **Develop a new friendship.** You're never too old to make a new friend and enjoy being with others. Don't be afraid to go up and talk to a peer. Social interactions help improve your mood and enhance your self-esteem. Remember, sometimes laughter really is the best medicine.
- **Relax and find inner peace.** Relaxation is a great way to clear your mind and find inner happiness. Rest and get a good night's sleep. Sleep is just as important as living an active lifestyle to keep you alert and healthy.

Social wellness helps create an overall feeling of good health and wellness in mind, body and soul.



By Linda Windley, MS, QP, LRT/CTRS

Dear Geri,

I have noticed that many of my neighbors have a vegetable garden this summer. They seem to enjoy getting out each day and tending their plants. What do you think Geri of older adults growing their own vegetables?

Thanks,
Mary

Dear Mary,

As you may have noticed with your neighbors, gardening is a favorite pastime for many people who enjoy growing their own food. The joy of planting, tending, and harvesting your own vegetables make the work and taste worthwhile. According to Emily Mann with *Mother Earth News* gardening has benefits that enhance the soul as well as the body. Listed below are a few of these benefits.

1. Improve your satisfaction with life.

It's hard not to enjoy life when you're surrounded by flowers, vegetables and all the wildlife they attract – and now there's science to back that up. Professors from the University of Texas and Texas A&M asked 298 older adults how they would rate their "zest for life," levels of optimism, and overall resolution and fortitude and found that gardeners had significantly higher scores in all those areas than non-gardeners. Considering that antidepressant use among adults over 65 has nearly tripled since the 1980s, gardening could be as useful as Prozac for warding off the blues in our aging population.

2. Lower your osteoporosis risk.

It's probably no surprise that gardening, and all the physical activity that goes along with it, leads to weight loss and better overall physical health, but that physical activity can improve your bones as well. In a study of 3,310 older women, researchers from the University of Arkansas found that women involved in yard work and other types of gardening exercises had lower rates of osteoporosis than joggers, swimmers and women who did aerobics. That likely has to do with the fact that gardening is sort of like weight training, the study authors note; you have to pull weeds, dig holes, carry heavy loads of soil and compost, and do other forms of weight-bearing activities that ward off osteoporosis.

3. Lower your diabetes risk.

One of the primary components of managing diabetes is getting enough physical exercise. Active gardeners easily get more than the recommended 150 minutes per week of exercise, and those who garden just for fun get just slightly less than that, according to research from Kansas State University.

If you grow food in your garden, you have another diabetes-management tool at your disposal: fresh produce. A number of studies have found that diabetes rates are lower in areas with community gardens, or places where backyard gardening is more common.

4. Better sleep.

The mental health benefits of gardening are so strong that a field of medicine called

horticultural therapy has been developed to help people who have psychiatric disorders

deal with their conditions. Studies of people with dementia and anxiety have found that

gardening helps calm their agitation, leading to better sleep patterns and improved quality

of their rest. There's no reason the rest of us won't benefit, too. Researchers from the

International Society for Horticultural Science interviewed 42 people both with cancer and without cancer, and found that all of them used gardening as a coping strategy for stressful life situations. The less we are stressed out, the better we will sleep.



***Long term care facilities can utilize gardening by using raised beds, window boxes, and indoor plants.

Sincerely,
Geri



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MEDICATION CORNER

By Linda Klund, RN, BSN

Opioid addiction has become a major problem for people of all ages and there has been an increase of marijuana use with old adults. We often think of older adults not being part of the drug scene, when in fact this picture is changing. A recent article in the *AARP Bulletin June 2017 Vol 58 No 5, The New Dealers* written by Joe Eaton speaks to this problem.



In his article, Mr. Eaton quotes from an e-mail he received from a drug dealer serving time for distributing painkillers. Ajellon Dedeaux (the dealer) stated the hardest part of dealing was obtaining a reliable supplier of the drugs. He found that older people were great suppliers. "They want to make some extra money and don't mind selling the pills." Financial hardship is the main reason that older adults are willing to chance selling their medication. In other instances it was to simply to finance their own addiction habits or they were threatened by dealers and forced into selling.

So how do they get the medications? Well, it is easy to tell some doctors that they are having pain and need the extra drugs. Not to mention there are some doctors that will give them extra pills just in case they need them. But not all who become addicted are looking for that high. Some begin their journey with pain medications after having surgery for post-operative treatment. Whatever the reason, the cost of addiction is very high for everyone. For the older adult who gets caught dealing, there is public embarrassment, being labeled as a drug dealer, financial burden from legal issues, and the physical pain of withdrawals if addicted. Most do not get jail time but probation which is another financial burden.

Another issue for the older adult is having their medications stolen by a child or family member who is addicted. This neglect can lead to drug abuse and a worsening of the disease process. Family issues also develop when grandparents are forced to raise grandchildren because their parents are addicted to drugs. In order to help curb the over prescribing of pain medications, our state has implemented a shared database that tracks prescriptions for pain medications as well as other medications that are over prescribed. Doctors now have guidelines that tells them how many pills to prescribe and how long a person should take these medications. The database also tracks "doctor shopping" or how many doctors a person sees for these medications.

What can you do? Limit the amount and the length of time you take pain medications. Sometimes pain is a reminder for us to avoid using the injured body part (like a sprain). Get rid of all old and unused medications. Most police stations have a medication drop box or offer quarterly drop drives. If you know someone who has a problem, get them help when they are ready to listen. Understand that it is not easy to stop taking these medications but remind them that it can be done at any age. To help someone with addiction, call Trillium Health Resources at 1-877-685-2415.

EASY BLUEBERRY PIE

This easy homemade dessert pie screams summer and is perfect for serving with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.



- all-purpose flour for dusting work surface
- pie dough for double 9-inch pie crust, chilled
-
- 2 1/2 pints (5 cups) fresh blueberries
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons milk or cream
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup brown sugar + extra for sprinkling on top
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 large egg, beaten with 1 tablespoon water (for egg wash)

Preparation:

1. Butter a 9-inch pie pan. For crust: On a lightly floured surface, roll out half of dough to 1/8-inch-thick circle. Fit into a 9-inch buttered pie pan, trim, leaving about 1/2-3/4 inch overhang. Cover crust with plastic wrap and chill in refrigerator for about 30 minutes. If making a full top crust, roll out remaining half of dough into a circle approximately 1 inch larger in diameter than pie pan, cover with plastic wrap and chill in refrigerator for about 30 minutes. If creating a lattice top, on a lightly floured surface, roll remaining half of dough 1/8 inch thick into rectangle approximately 11×14 inches. Cut into 10 separate 3/4 inch strips. Cover strips with plastic wrap and chill for about 30 minutes.
2. Adjust oven racks, place one rack on bottom level and one in the middle. Place baking sheet or baking stone on bottom rack. Preheat oven to 400-degrees F.
3. In a large bowl whisk together lemon juice and milk, gradually sprinkle in 4 tablespoons of flour, whisk until smooth. Stir in brown sugar and cinnamon. Add blueberries, and stir to coat. Let sit for about 5 minutes. Pour into prepared bottom crust.
4. Brush the rim of the crust with the egg wash, place the top crust on, trim to 1/2 inch larger than size of pan, and crimp together edges with fingers to seal bottom and top crusts, or weave strips of dough to create lattice top, crimping edges to seal. If dough seems soft and warm, cover top with plastic wrap and chill pie in refrigerator for about 20-30 minutes. (Pie can also be tightly wrapped (airtight) with plastic wrap and placed in a large plastic zip-top freezer bag and frozen for up to 2 months.)
5. Brush crust with the egg wash, sprinkle lightly with sugar and place pie on baking sheet or baking stone on bottom rack and bake for 20 minutes. Reduce heat to 375-degrees F and transfer pie (on baking sheet) to center rack. Cover the rim of pie crust with foil. Continue to bake at 375-degrees F until crust is golden and the filling is bubbling, about 30 to 40 minutes. Check crust every 10 minutes or so, and if crust/lattice starts to brown too much, tent pie loosely with a piece of foil. Let cool to set and thicken before serving (if you can wait that long).

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COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

JULY

National Holidays

- ★ July 4 - Independence Day

Observances

- ★ Social Wellness Month

Opportunities

- ★ July 22 - 9:00am-1:00pm
NC Alzheimers Bike Ride
Location: Home Place of New Bern
1309 McCarthy Boulevard
New Bern, NC 28562
Click below to register and purchase tickets
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/nc-alzheimers-bike-ride-tickets-35184277120?aff=es2>



THE GRANDS GROUP

(Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Meetings)
12-1 p.m.

Location: Pitt County Council on Aging
4551 County Home Road, Greenville

UPCOMING MEETINGS

July 6, August 3, September 7, October 5,
November 2, December 7

AUGUST

National Holidays

Observances

- ★ August 21 - Senior Citizen's Day



National Senior Citizens Day

"SENIOR CENTER WITHOUT WALLS"

Is an award-winning program of [Episcopal Senior Communities](#) offering activities, education, friendly conversation, and an assortment of classes, support groups, and presentations to seniors. Each week, seniors can access over 70 groups by phone or online, all from the comfort of home.