Family Health History Senior Citizens Outreach Project

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OVERVIEW

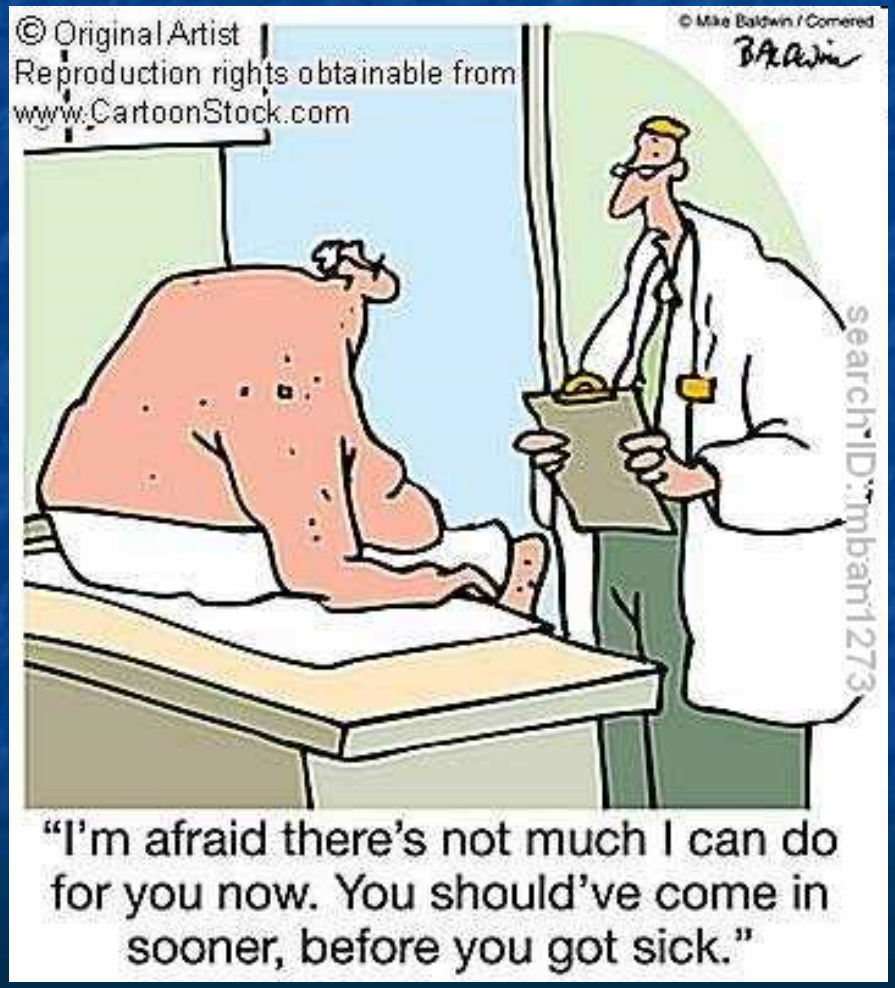
- Why focus on senior citizens?
- How is the approach different?
- Designing outreach materials specifically for this demographic
- Organizations involved in outreach
- Current status of the project

Why focus on senior citizens?

- Liaisons in population based genomics and personalized medicine
  - Knowledge that comes with experience
  - Utilizing and appreciating the wisdom of age
- UTAH- Senior Friendly FHH Toolkit
  - Specifically designed for senior members in the family
  - Excellent resource that is underutilized

Why the different approach?

- Most health promotion programs focuses on prevention of onset of diseases
- Majority in this demographic are likely to already have at least one chronic health condition.



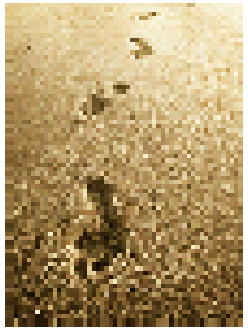
“Older Americans have carried our Nation through great challenges and triumphs. They have enriched our national character and strengthened the Republic for those who have followed. During the month of May, we pay tribute to the wisest among us.”

- President Obama’s Press Release , May 4th 2009, in the occasion of Older Americans Month.

Outreach Materials

- Press Release- MAY is OLDER AMERICANS MONTH- Theme this year is "Living Today for a Better Tomorrow."
- "senior-friendly" leaflet
  - Plain simple English
  - Font size
  - Background
  - Subtle colors
  - Lots of white space
  - 6th grade reading level

Cover Sleeve



FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY

Your gift to ensure the health and wellbeing of future generations

Workbook Insert

Information for SENIOR CITIZENS

WHAT IS FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY?

- Family health history is the information about diseases that run in families.
- Family members share their genes as well as their environment, lifestyles and habits.
- Knowing family history can help reduce the risk of developing health problems in families.

WHY IS FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY IMPORTANT?

- Physical traits such as eye color, hair color and height are passed down from one generation to the next. The same is true for certain diseases and risk factors for getting diseases.
- Family elders may know about diseases and causes of death in the family that their children and grandchildren do not know.
- Family members who have this information may want to get tested for diseases before they get sick. It might help them decide to change unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and drinking alcohol, to eat better, and to get more physical exercise.

WHAT DISEASES RUN IN FAMILIES?

These are some diseases that run in families:

Alzheimer disease	Arthritis
Asthma	Birth defects
Diabetes	Cystic fibrosis
Cancers (colon, prostate, breast etc)	Depression
Dementia	Obesity
Heart disease and stroke	Sickle cell
High blood pressure	High Cholesterol

HOW TO COLLECT A FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY?

- Organize a family get together to talk about family health history. Invite your parents, brothers, sisters, children and grandchildren.
- The important things to talk about are:
  - the disease you now have or that your ancestors had in the past
  - the person's age when the disease started or was diagnosed.
  - the age and cause of death for family members who have died
  - lifestyle habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, diet, weight, and exercise habits
- Write down the information you share with your family. The younger family members might want to draw a chart using the information you gather.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE INFORMATION?

- Give this record as a gift to your children and grandchildren. Make family health history a family tradition.
- Ask your family members to share this information with their doctors. This will help them to get screening tests or lab tests to find a health problem early before symptoms appear.
- Encourage your family to eat healthier food and get exercise. Develop a plan to cook healthy meals together and exercise together (for example family game day or a walk in the park). This will strengthen the family bond and make everyone healthier.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS?

The U.S Surgeon General has a "Family Health History Initiative" that is free and easy to use. The tool is available in English and Spanish and you can use it online or get it in print at the U.S Surgeon General's website at
http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/

Potential Outreach Methods

- Use of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to promote FHH initiative

- Utilizing newsletters, email announcements, brochures of already existent programs and services

Organizations to involve in Outreach

- Department of Health and Human Services
  AGING SERVICES DIVISION
  - Senior Centers, Area Agency in Aging
  - Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
  - Connecticut Association for Senior Center Personnel (CASCP)

Current status of the project

- Constraints
  - Unavailability of demographic-specific outreach materials
  - Staff Time
  - Financial
- Collaborate with other organizations and agencies in the State.

Questions??