THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL THERAPY WITHIN A PARTNERSHIP MODEL FOR HEALTH PROMOTIONS PROGRAMS-A SPECIAL INTEREST REPORT

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The poster was funded by the Mayo Clinic School of Health Sciences Doctoral Program in Physical Therapy, Rochester, MN.

Special Interest Report related to the category: “meeting patient and community needs”-IRB approval not applicable.

PURPOSE: To describe the implementation of evidence-based health promotion programs in Southeastern Minnesota through the WellConnect SE MN® Partnership and the role physical therapists (PTs) can play in promotion, referral, program coaching/facilitating, guest speaking, professional networking, and advocacy.

DESCRIPTION: Access to and delivery of evidenced-based programs (EBPs) to support health and wellness within communities can be limited. Since 2015, through an innovative collaboration of individuals and over 20 organizations in 11 Southeast Minnesota counties, a “community system” with an online portal has been developed for consumers, health care professionals and program facilitators/coaches to access EBPs. Considering the demanding health care climate, physical therapists working in hospitals and clinics may not be aware of EBPs within their communities. EBPs for fall prevention and fitness like Matter of Balance, Stepping On, Tai Ji Quan, Stay Active and Independent for Life Fit & Strong, and Arthritis Foundation Exercise may be very appropriate for many patients seen by physical therapists and be an important bridge from sick-care to well-care for clients.

OBSERVATIONS: Positive experiences from participants completing EBPs and from physical therapists engaged in the referral process and/or coaching/facilitating EBPs have been reported since the launch of the WellConnect Partnership and the online portal. Yet, recent research does suggest an implementation “disconnect” between primary care and community-based programs for disease self-management and prevention so sustained efforts to bridge sick-care and well-care remains a challenge.

CONCLUSIONS: Physical therapy has a valuable role to play in the promotion and the delivery of community-based EBPs for health, wellness and prevention. Continued efforts to familiarize therapists regarding available EBPs and their benefits are recommended.

IMPLICATIONS: PTs can actively engage in referral to EBPs, partner with community stakeholders, advocate for policy change, and educate others in EBPs, ultimately positively impacting the health and wellness of their clients.