

April 2017

From: Missouri Area Health Education Centers

IMPROVING CARE FOR MISSOURI'S ELDERS

Assuring health care (HC) systems that are patient-centered, effective, safe, efficient, and cost effective is increasingly critical—especially with the burgeoning over-65 population. To help providers more quickly assess and address several elder health needs, two valuable geriatrics resources (the RGA and CST) are now being disseminated to HC students, faculty, primary care providers and communities across much of Missouri. The Northeast, Southeastern, Southwest, and East Central Missouri AHECs are working with A. T. Still University (ATSU), the ATSU AHEC, and the Saint Louis University Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (SLU GWEP) to “spread the word” and help provide training. Partial funding for this initiative comes from DHHS through HRSA.

Rapid Geriatric Assessment (RGA): The RGA is a tool developed by SLU to screen for improvable conditions, e.g., muscle weakness, anorexia, cognitive status, and advanced healthcare planning. This tool encourages an interprofessional approach focusing on functional abilities, life quality, and risk of decline. Recent RGA activities have included:

- Through its Interprofessional Education and Practice Program, ATSU AHEC annually trains nearly 200 ATSU medical and dental students and Truman State University athletic training, communication disorders, health and exercise science, and nursing students to administer the RGA
- All 170 ATSU first year medical students receive RGA training and complete assessments during their summer clinical rotations.
- SWMO AHEC recently coordinated an RGA workshop for Missouri State University students, ATSU medical students, family medicine residents, and physicians featuring SLU geriatrician, Dr. Milta Little.
- SEMO AHEC partnered with SEMO State University and others to host Conversations for Successful Aging: A Gerontology Conference for Professionals where ~100 attendees learned about the RGA.

Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST): CST is an evidence-based, non-pharmacological individual or group intervention for persons with dementia. Group CST brings older adults with mild or moderate dementia together for 14 sessions centered on mental stimulation in a respectful, person-centered environment. Research indicates that CST offers many of the same benefits as medications for dementia without side effects.

- CST individual and group activities have already been offered in four northeast Missouri counties with assistance from NEMO AHEC staff.
- A pilot elective course for ATSU medical and dental students on Individual Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (iCST) engaged five students who delivered iCST sessions for community-living elders.
- SWMO AHEC is sponsoring CST training for students, faculty, and home health agencies in and around Springfield.

This initiative is another example of MAHEC partnerships that are improving health care for Missourians!



Playing Jenga promotes socialization and mental stimulation for CST group members

MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally-governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the number of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the number of professionals caring for underserved populations.

The MAHEC partners include:

- A.T. Still University – Kirksville
- University of Missouri – Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- Northeast Missouri AHEC – Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri AHEC – St. Joseph
- West Central Missouri AHEC – Lexington
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- East Central Missouri AHEC – St. Louis
- Southeastern Missouri AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwest Missouri AHEC – Springfield