

Senior Health: Flourish & Thrive

An ARHP initiative to advance senior health in the South Arkansas Delta

THE FACTS

AN AGING POPULATION

Approximately **1 in 5 individuals** in the 19-county South Arkansas Delta region **are age 65 and older**.¹ The average life expectancy is 72.2 years (3.3 years less than the state and 6.3 years less than the U.S. average).²

CHRONIC DISEASE

Medicare beneficiaries in the region have **high rates of diabetes (28%), high blood pressure (67%), and high cholesterol (43%)**.³

HEALTH-SOCIAL NEEDS

Poor access to healthcare, lack of sufficient insurance, the high cost of prescription medications, lack of healthy food options and exercise opportunities exacerbate and contribute to medical conditions.

FOOD & NUTRITION

Nearly **1 in 5 individuals (17%)** in the region experience food insecurity.²

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Nearly half of residents **lack access to exercise opportunities**. 1 in 3 individuals are physically inactive.²



What if your golden years could be your best?

With every passing day, the number of seniors is growing as individuals are living longer and more Baby Boomers reach 65 years and above. In fact, approximately 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65 every day and by 2030, all Baby Boomers will have reached this milestone.⁴ In response to the significant increase in the aging population, ARHP is launching new and expanded efforts to strategically support the health and wellness of seniors across South Arkansas (predominantly Delta).

The Challenge & Opportunity. Chronic disease rates are high in the target population due to poor health factors (such as social determinants of health) and health behaviors

that can be prevented and/or reduced by positive change. For many Delta senior residents, the slippery slope to chronic disease was not an obvious or deliberate choice. In fact, poor access to care, lack of insurance, the high cost of prescription medications, lack of healthy food options, and exercise opportunities both exacerbate and contribute towards these medical conditions.

Program Design. The program is designed to specifically address the following common health and wellness barriers in the target population (seniors age 60 and above with diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease living within the 19-county South Arkansas Delta region): access to locally available healthcare, prescription medication cost barriers, lack

PROMOTING SENIOR HEALTH & WELLNESS IN RURAL ARKANSAS

of health insurance, transportation and distance barriers, decreased mobility issues, food inequality, access to exercise opportunities, and quality diabetes self-management education. Efforts will improve the whole health needs of seniors with diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease through social determinants of health interventions, new and expanded nutrition & exercise programs, and remote monitoring to improve health outcomes. The program employs multiple evidence-based models: community health worker model, Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP), Drums Alive Golden Beats, and Tai Chi.

Program Elements

Social Determinants of Health. Chronic care management teams housed at partnering hospital-affiliated clinics (80+) refer seniors to support and enabling services. ARHP Community Health Workers (CHWs) then provide targeted interventions (i.e. insurance enrollment, housing assistance, patient navigation, referrals to chronic care management, etc.) to address social determinant of health needs in approximately 4,000 seniors (60+) at-risk of and/or diagnosed with diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease each year.



Patient Remote Monitoring. Chronic care managers also select seniors with diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease to utilize remote patient monitoring devices to support health outcomes and health behaviors (up to 270 seniors over the course of a three-year period). The real-time, ongoing health data is integrated into the care visit (within the clinic setting). This rich feedback informs and supports care delivery, with the goal of demonstrating health improvements in chronic disease conditions.

The Good Food Rx. Seniors experiencing food insecurity benefit from access to The Good Food Rx sites (Lake Village and Helena, Arkansas). The Good Food Rx is an initiative providing healthy prepared meals (Lake Village) or groceries (Helena) to seniors to alleviate hunger and promote healthy food options.

The Good Food Rx Helena site is facilitated by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and managed by Well Fed.

Healthy Cooking Classes. Beginning Thanksgiving 2023, aging adults with diabetes and cardiovascular disease will also benefit from expanded access to healthy cooking classes and cookbooks. Local churches and The Good Food Rx sites (Lake Village and Helena, AR) host monthly cooking classes and distribute cookbooks to participants. Individuals will benefit from knowledge related to nutrition, diet, and healthy foods, as well as improved health behaviors and outcomes, and increased community engagement. This effort is in partnership with the Arkansas Minority Health Commission.

Virtual Exercise Programs. Beginning January 2024, ARHP will launch live evidence-based exercise classes for seniors via Zoom (live, secure link). Exercise programs will include senior-friendly Drums Alive Golden Beats and Tai Chi and can be completed at home or in a group setting (hosted by local churches and other community groups). Participants will benefit from increased access to free exercise opportunities designed for seniors, while improving motivation, fitness adherence, balance, gait, and quality of life. The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Centers on Aging will lead the exercise classes.

Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP). Beginning January 2024, ARHP Community Health Workers (CHWs) will provide evidence-based DEEP classes. The 6-week in-person course (12-15 persons/course) will be offered throughout the 19-county service area. Over 1,000 seniors per year will benefit from this program which is known to promote self-management of pre-diabetes and existing diabetes, prevent complications and incapacities, develop self-care skills, improve patient and healthcare provider relationships, and more. The Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care will provide the DEEP training certification for ARHP CHWs. Local churches will host the DEEP classes.