

Pennsylvania

Serving ALL Counties

Rural Health News

A resource exchange from the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health for health professionals, extension and outreach coordinators, and community organizers

Spring 2006

Vol.15 No. 2

StrongWomen Program Encourages Individuals to “Use It or Lose It”

By S. William Hessert, Jr.

Osteoporosis – a debilitating disease which causes bones to become fragile and break more easily – is one of the greatest health threats facing Americans today, particularly those 50 or older. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, nearly 10 million people in the United States already suffer from osteoporosis while another 34 million have low bone mass, which increases their risk of developing the disease. Approximately 80 percent of all those afflicted with the disease are women; in fact, about 18 percent of all white women suffer a fracture caused by osteoporosis by their 65th birthday.

Osteoporosis robs bone from individuals with no outward signs and usually without pain, which is why it is referred to as “the silent disease.” In the United States alone, osteoporosis causes 1.5 million fractures each year. Eventually, even a minor stumble might cause someone to fracture a hip, spine, wrist or other bone – fractures that can lead to surgery, disability or a loss of independence. Nearly 20 percent of patients die as a result of complications of a major fracture or its corrective surgery.

Osteoporosis is costly from a financial perspective as well, with estimates of medical costs associated with the disease exceeding \$18 billion annually. And that doesn't

take into account loss of income, services and productivity.

That's the bad news. The good news, however, is that exercising and eating well can help strengthen bones and prevent additional bone loss. Physical activity in general and strength training in particular builds muscle and bone mass, increases strength, flexibility and balance



and helps individuals win the battle against weakness and frailty.

The message is simple – “use it or lose it.”

Despite the benefits that can come from increased physical activity, many women over the age of 50 are reluctant to start an exercise program. “A lot of these women hear the term ‘strength training’ and immediately begin thinking of health clubs and all of those big weights,” says Nancy Wiker, a Penn State Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Educator in Lancaster County. “They have no interest in

joining a health club – doing so is quite intimidating to them.”

For others, especially those living in rural communities, intimidation may not be the issue – it may be that they don't have a health club in their community. Whatever the case may be, there is an obvious need for an exercise program that helps women age 50 or older overcome these barriers and reduces the risks associated with osteoporosis.

Fortunately, such a program already exists and is being offered in 28 Pennsylvania counties.

StrongWomen, a program created by Dr. Miriam Nelson – an expert in exercise physiology and nutrition at Tufts University – is an exercise program designed specifically to help mid-life and older women increase their physical activity. Participants attend a series

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Pennsylvania Rural Health News is a free quarterly publication of the **Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health (PORH)**. Located at Penn State, PORH receives support from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Pennsylvania State University.

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From the Director...



Welcome to the spring issue of *Pennsylvania Rural Health News*. As we look toward the summer and all that the season brings, I'd like to share with you two new initiatives which your state office of rural health has planned.

First, PORH is pleased to announce the release of the executive summary of our strategic plan for 2006-2009. This three-year plan focuses on engaging in a continuous assessment of the issues and trends affecting the delivery of healthcare services in rural Pennsylvania so that we can not only address current areas of need but plan for future initiatives to address emerging concerns. The intent of this process to look not *to* but *through* the current landscape of policy, legislation, regulation and health needs to devise strategies to meet tomorrow's issues. The strategic plan also focuses on diversifying PORH's sources of support and partnerships and expanding our initiatives in education, outreach, advocacy, applied research and special projects to meet identified areas of need. The executive summary is a companion to an expanded internal document that will guide the implementation of the Strategic Plan. It also will be used in conjunction with the balanced scorecard management tool that we developed for the office that outlines our efforts in four targeted areas: financial support; customer service; internal business processes and staff development, learning and growth.

Second, for the last 14 years, PORH has been bringing to you four issues of this newsletter a year. In the 2006-2007 fiscal year, PORH will change that format. Our goal is to publish three issues annually of a 12-page magazine rather than four issues of an eight-page newsletter. This change will give us expanded opportunities to discuss the issues affecting the health status of rural Pennsylvanians, showcase the excellent initiatives underway in rural areas of the state and provide more in-depth news on rural health policy and legislation. It is our hope that this new format will allow us to meet our mission of service to those of you who are meeting the healthcare needs of rural residents of the Commonwealth.

However, key efforts remain the same. This includes the coordination of the Pennsylvania Rural Health Conference, the only conference in the state devoted exclusively to rural health issues. We hope that you were able to join us at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel in State College on June 26-27 for the 14th Annual Pennsylvania Rural Health Conference: *Preserving Pathways to Rural Health*. The primary focus of this year's event was on rural health policy and legislation. Keynote speakers discussed federal policy and its' intended and unintended impacts; the legislative forums sponsored by the Pennsylvania Rural Health Association gave participants the chance to hear from the Gubernatorial and Senatorial candidates about their views on rural health issues and potential solutions to address identified areas of need. And the rural health awards ceremony was a wonderful forum to honor rural health leaders in the state. We were glad to have seen you there.

Thank you for your support of your state office of rural health. Let us know how we can best serve you and please continue to stay in touch. ❖

Fulton County Medical Center Breaks Ground

The Fulton County Medical Center (FCMC), one of Pennsylvania's Critical Access Hospitals, is an 82-bed acute and skilled nursing care facility that is operated, maintained and managed independently. The facility is the only hospital and long-term care facility in the county. FCMC is located in southcentral Pennsylvania. In addition to offering a range of traditional hospital services, including emergency care, FCMC also maintains a specialty clinic that hosts specialists from the tri-state region.

Currently, FCMC's 49,000 square foot facility is located on two acres of land which restricts future growth. However, FCMC held a ground breaking ceremony on April 28, 2006 for their new replacement hospital which will be built approximately one mile from the current location on 22 acres of land. The new hospital is anticipated to be a one-story building containing 100,000 square feet of space at a cost of \$37M. The construction of the hospital is expected to begin in May of 2006, with an anticipated opening date of November 2007.

The new facility will have 88 beds, including 21 acute care beds; one isolation bed; two intensive care beds and 67 skilled nursing beds. The project will increase the current facility square footage by 40 percent and provide more convenience of ground-level access for all services. Inpatient services will be located near the main entrance providing more privacy for patients, residents and visitors. The layout of the general building will make all of the services easily accessible to customers and there will also be increased parking. The enhancement of emergency services including an onsite heliport for emergency transports and the expansion of the nursing home beds from 57 to 67 are just a few of the improvements to the facility. The increase in size of the dining and activities rooms for residents and a separate entrance for the hospital and long-term care will bolster the quality of life for the 67 residents. The new facility will also include a new private chapel area and will have more than ample room for additions in the future.

The Fulton County Medical Center has struggled for well over a decade to build this new facility and with the help of the community, federal and state political leaders and local business, JLG Industries; FCMC is finally seeing their vision become a reality. Not only are they within \$500,000 of this goal, but FCMC has secured in excess of \$10M in grants and funding toward the \$37M dollar replacement facility.

The Fulton County Medical Center President and CEO, Diane Palmer, and CFO and Building Project Manager, Jason Hawkins, have been instrumental in getting this project jumpstarted after a hiatus in 2004. ❖



For more information on the Fulton County Medical Center building project, please visit www.fcmlpa.org.

PORH Welcomes Intern

PORH welcomes Jennifer Oliver as the office's summer intern. Jennifer is a senior pursuing a degree in health policy and administration with a minor in economics at Penn State. She is a native of Montrose, Pennsylvania, in Susquehanna County. Jennifer is a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society and the National Dean's list.

After graduation, Jennifer plans to further her education by obtaining a masters degree in public health as she plans to pursue a career in public health, health promotion or quality improvement.

In her free time, Jennifer participates in the Quantum Jujitsu Club and Warrior Yoga Club, the Health Policy and Administration Club and is active in Penn State's annual student Dance Marathon that raises money for cancer research as well as other service committees. ❖



Federal Funding Supports Agricultural Emergency Training

Penn State Cooperative Extension has received U.S. Department of Homeland Security approval for delivery of an agricultural emergencies training courses. The series of courses was developed for emergency services disciplines, volunteer groups, agencies and organizations that have interest in and responsibilities to respond to agricultural emergencies.

In areas where agriculture is an important industry, a variety of emergencies and disasters can occur. These range from trauma events or fires where emergency services disciplines are summoned; to zoonotic diseases where public and private health professionals come together; to disasters where farm animals are affected and multiple agencies and trained volunteers may need to respond side by side. Agricultural emergencies require responders to have specialized knowledge and skill to effectively and safely respond.

Many disasters or emergencies may occur naturally such as floods, fires, explosions or storm damage and some may occur as intentional acts of terrorism, including diseases, or chemical, biological, radiologic or nuclear agents or explosions. Because localized resources and training for this wide range of topics are difficult to coordinate, this training combines those materials into one event

There are no prerequisites for the course and presenters will be Penn State faculty and staff, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture regional veterinarians and emergency management coordinators. Topics to be covered include farm orientation; first- on-the-scene response; biosecurity; animal behavior; animal handling; diseases of importance; tractor and machinery accidents; chemical and biological agents and more. ❖

For more information, contact Dave Hill at 814-865-2808 or deh27@psu.edu.

Pennsylvania Department of Health Offers Assistance in Recruiting Physicians

The Pennsylvania Department of Health would like to hear from you regarding physician vacancies. They may be able to assist with the recruitment of primary care physicians as well as specialists through the Loan Repayment Program for U.S. citizens and the J-1 Visa Waiver Program for non-citizens. For more information or to discuss a physician vacancy, please contact Fred Bowlan (Loan Repayment Program) or Connie Hanna (J-1 Visa Waiver Program) at 717-772-5298. ❖



Edward G. Rendell, Governor
Calvin B. Johnson, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary of Health

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Implements McKesson Disease Management Programs

ACCESS Plus is a Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) program that integrates primary care case management with a disease management service that includes a Pay-for-Performance (P4P) incentive program for physicians.

ACCESS Plus began in March 2005 and now serves approximately 270,000 Medicaid beneficiaries in the Commonwealth's 42 rural counties, although it is a statewide initiative. DPW is utilizing McKesson's CareEnhance Disease Management Asthma, Diabetes, COPD, Coronary Artery Disease and Heart Failure Programs.

Medicaid beneficiaries, who participate in the disease management program, receive comprehensive and systematic care of their chronic illnesses and have the opportunity to select a primary care practitioner (PCP).

ACCESS Plus PCPs are both supported and rewarded for delivering high-quality care to beneficiaries. PCPs who actively participate in the disease management portion of the ACCESS Plus Program will qualify for P4P incentives. P4P payments are made in addition to payments received for covered Medicaid services. ❖

For more information, please visit <http://www.accessplus.org/> and click on the "Provider Info" button.

Penn State Agricultural Fraternities Pocket Pennies for Future Farmers

Five Penn State Agricultural fraternities recently donated nearly \$200 to help two young men take a more active role in the family dairy operation. Members of Delta Theta Sigma, Alpha Zeta, Alpha Gamma Rho and Tau Phi Delta fraternities and Sigma Alpha sorority raised the funds through a Penny War campaign. The donation was presented to AgrAbility for Pennsylvanians' clients Colby and Tim Lehman.

Colby, 19, and Tim, 17 are the sons of Lester and Tina Lehman of Chambersburg. Both sons were born with a rare genetic condition, Dyggve-Melchoir-Clausen Syndrome, which resembles dwarfism. The

funds will be used to provide tools and equipment modifications that support their ongoing involvement on the farm.

"Service is an important component of our fraternity experience," says Seth Blake, Chairman of Philanthropy at Delta Theta Sigma, the lead fundraising fraternity of the organizations. "Many of our members have a direct connection with production agriculture and we are pleased to serve farm families with our fundraising efforts."

AgrAbility for Pennsylvanians helps individuals who are coping with many different kinds of physical challenges, including arthritis,

stroke, knee and back problems, amputations, vision and hearing disabilities and many others. The project is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and is a partnership of Penn State Cooperative Extension, Easter Seals Central Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation. ❖

For more information, please call 866-238-4434 or visit <http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/agrab/>.

Visit the AgrAbility/Agromedicine Tent at Ag Progress Days from August 15-17 at Rock Spings, PA to learn more about the programs. Explore hands-on displays of ergonomic tools for the farm and garden. Various health screenings will be offered daily. For more information, contact Linda Fetzer at 814-863-7490.

Pennsylvanians Respond to Healthcare Needs Survey

Health care has gotten worse in Pennsylvania in the past four years, according to 43 percent of respondents of a recent IssuesPA/Pew poll. Forty percent say they felt health care has stayed the same and ten percent indicated they feel health care has improved.

There are distinct differences by age in the future outlook. Those not yet eligible for Medicare have a less hopeful view of Pennsylvania's future in health care.

According to the recent poll, Pennsylvanians responding have concerns about the cost of health care. Nearly 30 percent of voters in the poll say candidates' positions on reducing health care costs will be a deciding factor during elections. Concerns about healthcare costs consistently have rated first in previous IssuesPA/Pew polls.

Pennsylvanians' concerns over costs may be well-founded. Employers and employees spent an average \$9,133 per family for health care coverage in 2003, and employees contributed roughly 23 percent. As healthcare costs escalate much faster than the rate of inflation, employers must decide whether to limit hiring, ask employees to contribute more towards premiums or not offer healthcare benefits at all. Employees are feeling that impact. Between 2000 and 2004, more than 700,000 fewer Pennsylvanians were covered through employer-sponsored health care plans. However, Pennsylvania is ahead of the national average of individuals covered through employer-sponsored plans.

Addressing the problems of the uninsured was the second major health care concern for those re-

sponding to the survey. Insurance for uninsured children was a major concern for 17 percent and 13 percent said they were most concerned about providing coverage for the uninsured, in general.

More than half of Pennsylvanians said they believe government should be chiefly responsible for paying most of the costs of long-term care for chronic illness. And nearly half said government should pay most of the bills for catastrophic or other very expensive medical care. ❖

For more information, visit <http://www.issuespa.net/articles/16001/>.

StrongWomen Program

continued from page 1

of one-hour sessions, typically twice a week during a six- to 12-week class cycle, during which they perform a series of simple exercises using free and ankle weights. The amount of weight being lifted is increased gradually during the class cycle, and pre- and post-physical assessments are conducted to document the strength, balance and flexibility changes that result from the gradual increases. Newsletters, handouts and facilitated discussions reinforce the rationale for making lifestyle changes.

Wiker says the goal is to help participants realize how enjoyable and beneficial exercising can be. "We try to keep everything as simple as possible," Wiker explains. "That way, we can encourage people who attend the classes twice a week to exercise a third time at home as well."

Wiker is actually the person responsible for bringing the StrongWomen program to Pennsylvania. "I took a Penn State course a few years ago called 'My New Weigh of Life,' and the instructor recommended a book by Dr. Nelson," she recalls. "I started doing the exercises that were in the book and I found them to be very beneficial."

After participating in a national extension educators workshop designed to train StrongWomen site leaders and traveling to Tufts for additional training as a site leader trainer, Wiker led her first site leader training during a Cooperative Extension in-service in March 2005.

Nearly 1,200 Pennsylvania women have participated in 209 StrongWomen classes since the program's debut last year. Feedback from the participants so far has been encouraging – most have indicated that they felt physically



stronger, had more energy, slept better, had less joint pain and generally were more active as a result of their participation.

Pre- and post-strength, balance and flexibility tests have demonstrated improvement as well. By the end of the sessions, most of the women more than doubled the amount of weight they were able to lift during the first class. In Gettysburg, a woman participating in the program increased the number of times she could perform the chair stand test by 60 percent.

"I recently had someone come back to me and say that their bone density had actually increased," Wiker shares. "Her doctor was astounded – he wanted to know what the heck she had been doing."

In addition to Penn State Cooperative Extension and community volunteers, Pennsylvania's StrongWomen program is supported by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences. ❖

For more information on the StrongWomen program – including how to become a site leader and/or bring a class to your area – please contact Nancy Wiker at (717) 394-6851 or nwiker@psu.edu. Additional information is also available on the StrongWomen Web site at www.strongwomen.com.

2006 Bone Health and Nutrition Conference Announced

The Pennsylvania Osteoporosis Coalition, Penn State's Department of Nutritional Sciences in the College of Health and Human Development and Penn State's College of Medicine are teaming up to present the 2006 Bone Health and Nutrition Conference.

The conference, slated for October 8 and 9, will offer the latest research and recommendations on bone health and nutrition. Attendees will learn about programs targeting prevention of osteoporosis in Pennsylvania; the common problems of osteoporosis in men; evidence-based lifestyles in childhood that may delay or prevent the development of osteoporosis; components of a falls prevention program and much, much more. ❖

For more information, visit <http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/BoneHealth/>.

Healthcare Business Specialists Offer Update

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services recently published a final regulation regarding provider enrollment and recertification of the provider information. It will be of benefit to all Rural Health Clinics, physicians and hospitals as it outlines the process to become a Medicare provider and how to maintain that status. The rules are effective as of June 20, 2006. ❖

For more information, contact Mark Lynn at 800-768-0278 or mrlhbs@aol.com

Family Doctor Devoted to Improving Care in Rural America Named Garber Professor at Thomas Jefferson University

Howard K. Rabinowitz, M.D., a family doctor who has been a member of the Jefferson Family Medicine faculty for 30 years, has been named the Ellen M. and Dale W. Garber Professor of Family Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.

Dr. Rabinowitz, a national leader in primary care and an international expert in increasing the supply of rural physicians, is director of the Physician Shortage Area Program (PSAP) at Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University. The author of more than 50 publications, Dr. Rabinowitz also has authored a book Caring for the Country: Family Doctors in Small Rural Towns, which tells the stories of the lives and work of ten family doctors caring for rural America, all of whom are graduates of Jefferson's PSAP.

"Dr. Rabinowitz's commitment to broadening the reach of our healthcare system lies in his vast contributions to improving the supply and retention of rural family physicians," said Richard C. Wender, M.D., alumni professor and chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine, Jefferson Medical College. "He believes that everyone deserves access to health care, and his dedication to this principle has benefited countless patients in this region and throughout the country."

Established in 1984 through the estate of Dale Garber, M.D., Jefferson Medical College Class of 1924, the Ellen M. and Dale W. Garber Professorship in Family Medicine was created to support the Department of Family and Community Medicine and help increase the number of family physicians graduating each year. Dr. Garber, who was born in the small rural town of Blain, PA, spent his professional career as a beloved family doctor in Chester County.

Board-certified in family medicine and pediatrics, Dr. Rabinowitz is a member of the Institute of Medicine

of the National Academy of Sciences and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*. He is a past-president of the American Board of Family Medicine and a former member of the Step II Committee on Public Health and Preventive Medicine of the United States Medical Licensure Examination.

Dr. Rabinowitz served as national project co-director of the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' \$8M Undergraduate Medical Education for the 21st Century project, a program to help teach medical students how to provide quality medical care. He also served on the National Advisory Committee of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Generalist Physician Initiative.

From 1993 to 1994, Dr. Rabinowitz was a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow in the Office of U.S. Senator John D. (Jay) Rockefeller IV of West Virginia. He serves on the board of the Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellowship Programs and served as a member of the Institute of Medicine's Committee for Implementing a Graduate Medical Education Trust Fund and as a consultant to the Council on Graduate Medical Education for its sixth report to Congress on "The Effect of Managed Care on the Physician Workforce and Medical Education."

A native of Pittsburgh, Dr. Rabinowitz earned his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine in 1971 and attended Rutgers University in New Jersey from 1964 to 1967. ♦

For more information, please contact
Nan Myers at 212-955-6300 or Nan.Myers@Jefferson.edu

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Provide New and Revised Fact Sheets

Six rural health fact sheets are now available in downloadable format from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Medicare Learning Network Web page located at www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts. The following fact sheets will be available free of charge in print format: Rural Referral Center Fact Sheet (new this year); Medicare Disproportionate Share Hospital Fact Sheet (new this year); Rural Health Clinic Fact Sheet (revised); Critical Access Hospital Program Fact Sheet (revised); Federally Qualified Health Center Fact Sheet (revised) and Sole Community Hospital Fact Sheet (revised). ♦

For more information, contact
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Please circulate

Conference Calendar

July 24 - 25

MEPS Data User Workshop

Rockville, MD

Contact: <http://www.aafp.org/conference.xml>

August 15 - 17

Ag Progress Days

Rock Springs, PA

Contact: Bob Oberheim, 814-865-2081 or

Agprogressdays@psu.edu

August 15 - 18

NCSL 2006 Annual Meeting and Exhibition

Nashville, TN

Contact: <http://www.ncsl.org/annualmeeting/>

August 16

2nd Annual Community Information Technology Workshop (CITW)

State College, PA

Contact: <http://learn.centreconnect.org/>

September 23 - 26

The 13th NIMH Biennial Research Conference

Bethesda, MD

Contact: <http://www.porh.cas.psu.edu/conferences/info/2006/callforpapers.pdf>

September 26 - 28

Planning and Partnering for Disaster Response and Recovery

Harrisburg, PA

Contact: Joyce Boissell at 412-258-8562

October 8 - 9

2006 Bone Health and Nutrition Conference

State College, PA

Contact: <http://www.outreach.psu.edu/cnf/BoneHealth>

November 16 - 18

National Rural Women's Health Conference

San Antonio, TX

Contact: 717-531-6483 or <http://www.hmc.psu.edu/ce/RWH2006/>