

## HEALTHWORD

Putting Health Promotion Back in Motion

November 2005

=====

HEALTHWORD is a monthly e-mail newsletter produced by the American Society on Aging's Live Well, Live Long project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Live Well, Live Long provides education and resources to professionals in the field of aging to help them improve health promotion and disease prevention efforts aimed at older adults. Current and past issues of this newsletter are available on the Live Well, Live Long website at <http://www.asaging.org/cdc/HealthWord.cfm>.

=====

### IN THIS ISSUE

#### FEATURE

What's hot in health promotion for older adults, part I: New developments and resources in the areas of falls prevention, driving wellness, and cognitive vitality

#### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Health promotion education and training events around North America

#### CORRECTION

From the October 2005 issue

-----

#### FEATURE

#### WHAT'S HOT IN HEALTH PROMOTION FOR OLDER ADULTS, PART I

Health promotion is often confused with health education. Health education focuses on changing the individual, while health promotion combines health education and environmental supports to change a community or group of individuals. Professionals in the field of aging can promote the health of older adults in a way that no other professionals can. Partnership between healthcare and aging-services professionals is key to creating healthy communities.

Over the course of the next two issues, HEALTHWORD will highlight health promotion efforts that incorporate the latest thinking on common issues that affect older adults. This month, we will discuss older-driver wellness, falls prevention, and cognitive vitality. In December, we will look at recent developments in nutrition, diabetes, and physical activity.

#### FALLS PREVENTION

By addressing four areas of risk, 30 to 50 percent of falls are preventable

Why do older adults fall? Internal risk factors such as poor balance, leg weakness, reduced vision, cognitive impairment, and medication side effects often combine with external risk factors such as tripping over a throw rug or curb. Prevention of 30 percent to 50 percent of falls in elders is possible through assessing risk properly, addressing the risk factors identified, promoting physical activity tailored to an elder's risk level (preferably with gait and balance exercise), and reducing home hazards. All four primary areas of risk need to be addressed:

- Physical mobility (gait and balance disorders, weak legs)
- Medications management (taking five or more prescription medications)
- Home safety (hazards inside the home)
- Environmental and community safety (hazards outside the home, neighborhoods not designed for safe walking)

In "Perceptions of Risk and Sociocultural Barriers to Home Safety for Elders" (posted online at <http://www.asaging.org/networks/NEST/max-124.cfm>), Judith C. Barker argues that what constitutes a falls risk varies, depending on the elder and the meaning of the "risk factor" -- a treasured rug, a deceased partner's footstool -- has in the context of his or her life. What's more, a home modification may signify "I'm old and infirm" rather than "I'm reducing hazards." Bridging the risk "gap" is critical to successful risk reduction.

Additional online resources on falls-risk reduction:

\* National Falls Free Action Plan and coalition:

<http://www.healthysagingprograms.com/content.asp?sectionid=98>

\* Fall Prevention Center of Excellence: <http://www.stopfalls.org/aboutus/index.shtml>

\* Debra J. Rose's "Fallproof!" physical activity program:

<http://www.humankinetics.com/products/showproduct.cfm?isbn=0736040889>

\* Winter 2002-03 issue (theme: falls prevention) of "Generations":

<http://www.generationsjournal.org/generations/gen26-4/toc.cfm>

## OLDER DRIVER SAFETY AND WELLNESS

Capacity, not age, determines driving fitness

Being old does not make one a bad driver. As we age, however, the likelihood increases for us to develop diseases and conditions that place us at risk for driving-related problems. Driving fitness and safe mobility should not necessarily focus on age but on capacity.

Ensuring elders' safe mobility is like assembling a jigsaw puzzle. It requires fitting together a number of pieces from the entire community. The first piece: helping older adults understand their physical conditions and self-regulate their driving. The second piece is to educate physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, and public health professionals so they can assist in

assessing elders' driving fitness, both physical and cognitive. The third piece is to provide programs in the community that achieve the following:

- \* Ensure cars are properly fitted to older drivers
- \* Inform drivers of health promotion activities that can stave off medical conditions that risk unsafe vehicle operation
- \* Educate and remind older drivers of the rules of the road
- \* Distribute self-assessment tools
- \* Most important, provide mobility alternatives to driving

For an overview of the driving wellness curriculum that the American Society on Aging and the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration has created, visit <http://www.asaging.org/drivewell>.

A few online resources containing older driver self-assessments:

- \* University of Michigan's "Driving Decisions Workbook": <http://www.umtri.umich.edu/library/pdf/2000-14.pdf>
- \* The AAA Foundation "Roadwise Review" CD-ROM: Contact your local AAA chapter
- \* The Florida Senior Safety Resource Center website on assessing driving knowledge: <http://www.fssrc.php.ufl.edu/>
- \* Older Californian Traffic Safety Task Force two-page set of questions: <http://www.eldersafety.org/pdfs/TakingControlofYourDrivingFuture-FINAL.pdf>

## COGNITIVE VITALITY

New techniques and exercises for maximizing brain function

Findings about the highly adaptive nature of the human brain and its ability to maintain itself have implications for maintaining cognitive fitness throughout life. Multiple components of mental, physical, and social activity reduce the risk for dementia. Current research has indicated that the baby boomer generation is concerned about cognitive function -- both attaining maximum capability as well as reclaiming function in areas of slippage.

Online resources:

- \* Dana Alliance for Brain Health and AARP's "Staying Sharp" campaign, which includes live presentations, a website, TV broadcasts, and print materials: <http://www.aarp.org/nrta>
- \* Posit Science Brain Fitness program, based around "brain training" computer exercises: <http://www.positscience.com/science/>

\* The Alzheimer's Association's "Maintain Your Brain" interactive workshops with tools for practical application: Contact your local Alzheimer's Association for more information

\* American Society on Aging's "Strategies for Cognitive Vitality," a free downloadable curriculum on cognitive wellness: <http://www.asaging.org/cdc>. Senior Services of America has trained lay leaders to conduct a modified version of this program, and they have presented at over 300 sites to date.

---

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Call for Abstracts: 27th Annual Meeting of the Southern Gerontological Society  
Deadline: December 15, 2005

The 2006 SGS Annual Meeting will take place April 5-8, 2006, in Lexington, Ky. The event will explore the natural associations that occur between research and practice when considering the aging of the baby boom generation in the South. Proposal abstracts for a session, paper, poster, discussion, or roundtable should follow one of the core conference tracks: "Elder Preparedness"; "Successful Aging? Life Course Perspectives"; "Human Rights and Aging"; "Serving Elders in Rural Environments"; "Sustaining Gerontology Through Education"; and "Public Health and Aging." For more information, visit <http://www.wfu.edu/academics/gerontology/sgs/>.

\* \* \*

Event: Society for Public Health Education 56th Annual Meeting  
Dates: December 8-10, 2005  
New Location: Philadelphia

The conference, whose theme is "Global Health Promotion: Bridging New Worlds and New Cultures," will build competencies for health educators in core areas such as multicultural communication and the influence of social and economic circumstances on health. It will also examine a worldwide epidemic: cardiovascular disease. For more information, visit <http://www.sophe.org/>.

\* \* \*

Event: 2005 American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting  
Dates: December 10-14, 2005  
Location: Philadelphia

This year the APHA Annual Meeting will explore the processes of systematically finding, appraising, and using scientific research as the basis for developing sound practices. A few of the sessions selected by APHA's Gerontological Health Section:

- \* International Aging Populations
- \* The Social Environment of Older Adults

\* Health Services Use and Adherence Behaviors Among Older Adults  
For more information, visit <http://www.apha.org/meetings/index.htm>.

\* \* \*

Event: 2005 White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA)  
Dates: December 11-14, 2005  
Location: Washington, D.C.

Occurring once a decade, the White House Conference on Aging will make policy recommendations to the president and Congress to assist the public and private sectors in promoting the dignity, health, independence, and economic security of older adults. The final agenda, approved by the WHCoA Policy Committee, includes the following issues:

- \* Planning Along the Lifespan
- \* The Workplace of the Future
- \* Our Community
- \* Health and Long-Term Living
- \* Civic Engagement and Social Engagement
- \* Technology and Innovation in an Emerging Senior/Boomer Marketplace

To view the complete agenda, visit  
[http://www.whcoa.gov/about/policy/meetings/annotated\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.whcoa.gov/about/policy/meetings/annotated_agenda.pdf).

\* \* \*

Event: 2006 Winter Public Health Institute  
Dates: January 2-7, 2006  
Location: Gainesville, Fla.

Offered by the University of Florida and the University of Minnesota, this institute provides professionals with a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in a chosen field of study for a single course or for the entire week. Sessions related to aging include “Public Health and Aging” and “Aging: Best Practices and Community Symposium.” For more information, visit [http://www.sph.umn.edu/publichealthplanet/events/2006W\\_PHI.html](http://www.sph.umn.edu/publichealthplanet/events/2006W_PHI.html).

\* \* \*

For more educational offerings in the field of aging, visit the searchable “Events in Aging” calendar on the ASA website: <http://www.asaging.org/calendar>.

Have an event related to health promotion and aging that you would like to tell your colleagues about? Please submit your event, call for papers, or grant announcements to Nancy Bui at [nbui@asaging.org](mailto:nbui@asaging.org). Include the title, organization, date and time, location, contact information, and a short description of the event.

-----  
CORRECTION

In October 2005 issue of HEALTHWORD, we omitted to note that the National Diabetes Education Program played a key role in the development of "Diabetes Prevention and Management: Small Steps With Big Rewards," the new Live Well, Live Long project module featured in the issue. We are deeply indebted to the Older Adult Workgroup of the National Diabetes Education program for their support and review of the materials.

=====  
HEALTHWORD

HEALTHWORD (ISSN 1554-5997) is published monthly by the American Society on Aging through a grant provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Subscription is free of charge, and you are welcome to forward this newsletter to interested colleagues.

SUBSCRIBE or UNSUBSCRIBE. To subscribe or unsubscribe to this newsletter, send an e-mail containing your name and e-mail address to [livewell@asaging.org](mailto:livewell@asaging.org).

UPDATE E-MAIL. If you wish to update the e-mail address for your subscription, send your name, old e-mail address and new e-mail address to [livewell@asaging.org](mailto:livewell@asaging.org).

SUGGESTIONS AND QUESTIONS. For more information or comments about the newsletter, please contact Chaya Gordon, research manager at ASA, at [chayag@asaging.org](mailto:chayag@asaging.org).

-----  
EDITOR  
Chaya Gordon

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
Jonathan Kauffman

CONTRIBUTORS  
Nancy Bui, Nancy Ceridwyn

LIVE WELL, LIVE LONG  
American Society on Aging  
833 Market Street, Suite 511  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Tel: (415) 974-9613  
Website: <http://www.asaging.org/CDC>

Copyright (c) 2005 American Society on Aging; all rights reserved.  
=====