

# **Bridging Gerontology Research and Practice: Evidence Based Health Promotion**

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More and more frequently, my gerontology students are expressing interest in gaining hands-on experience with the types of skills and knowledge that they will likely use when they move from the academic world to the professional world.

Two years ago, I was introduced to evidence-based health promotion (EBHP), a gold standard approach to program planning and implementation based on empirical research. Rather than offering programming for older adults (e.g., fall prevention) based on what “seems” to work or not work, EBHP programs have undergone rigorous assessment and evaluation so that one can be certain they are offering quality programming that will achieve measureable outcomes.

There are approximately 14 EBHP programs, including topics such as fall prevention, medication management, depression and physical activity. Perhaps most commonly offered in California is the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP). CDSMP is a six-week long course that teaches older adults how to best manage their chronic diseases through techniques such as stress management, proper nutrition and exercise.

Several agencies throughout California are qualified to train facilitators for CDSMP, such as Partners in Care Foundation (<http://www.picf.org/>). Recently, I entered into a collaboration with Partners in Care Foundation to design a course about EBHP for our gerontology students. The course will be offered as an upper-division gerontology elective with no pre-requisites. As part of the course, students will complete a Partners in Care led four-day intensive training to become facilitators of the CDSMP program. In pairs, they will facilitate two six-week courses for older adults at local agencies such as senior centers and assisted living facilities. During this time, they will complete weekly reflection papers, connecting their experiences with the goals of the course and overall learning objectives of the gerontology program. Their final paper for the course will entail proposing a new EBHP course (about an issue not yet addressed by an existing EBHP program), supported by an annotated bibliography of research sources to support their proposal.

Not only will students learn about evidence based health promotion, they will gain certification as facilitators of one such EBHP course. Both of these knowledge sets will make them more effective gerontology practitioners and leaders in the field.

## **Resources:**

National Council on Aging's Center for Healthy Aging online training modules: This site contains 9 user-friendly online learning modules that can be used to introduce students to the concept of evidence based health promotion. <http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=156>

Partners in Care Foundation: Access to more information about several evidence based health promotion programs and presentations/case studies about EBHP <http://www.picf.org/>