

Success Story

Engaging Patients with Disabilities and Chronic Health Conditions: Webinars delivered through the University of Kansas Medical Center Area Health Education Center

March, 2019

Summary

To educate Kansas health care providers, the Kansas Disability and Health Program partnered with the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) at the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC) to deliver a series of four webinars that share content about how medical staff can effectively serve patients with disabilities and chronic health conditions. AHEC is KUMC's primary statewide educational outreach to medical, nursing, and allied health professionals.

Challenge

Gaining the attention of busy medical professionals and giving them reason to spend time learning non-clinical content are challenges for public health programs. In addition, for a largely rural state, finding an effective way to gather a geographically dispersed group of professionals for meaningful dialog around this content poses a challenge.



Disability and Health Program
kansans with disabilities can be healthy

Solution

The Kansas Disability and Health Program's partnership with AHEC provided both a platform for content delivery and an incentive, in the form of continuing education units, for providers to participate in the webinars. Disability and Health staff delivered the webinars on four consecutive weeks, addressing these topics:

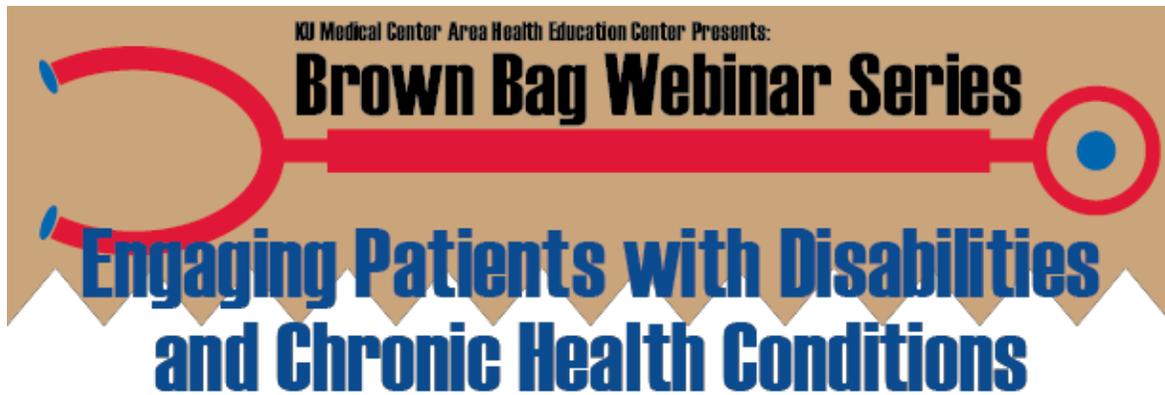
- Session 1 *Understanding Health Disparities and the Social vs. Medical Model of Disability*
- Session 2 *Addressing Real-Life Experiences of People with Disabilities*
- Session 3 *Creating an Accessible Health Care Environment*
- Session 4 *Navigating Medicare, Medicaid, and Employment for Patients with Disabilities*

Content delivery methods included lectures with slides, videos (including testimony from Kansans with disabilities about the barriers to health care they experience), interactive activities, and Q&A.

Results

The webinar series was well-received, with 83 participants attending one or more sessions, for a total attendance of 178, the majority of whom held nursing degrees. Following is information received through the evaluation of each webinar session, which illustrates the growth in knowledge and understanding among participating medical professionals.





Session 1 - Understanding Health Disparities and the Social vs. Medical Model of Disability engaged 52 participants. More than 80% reported that they agreed that the information presented positively affected their ability to function as part of a team. Further, 77% reported they learned something that they could take back to their team to improve outcomes for people with disabilities. Some strategies they planned to implement include:

- Being more cognizant to ask whether people need any accommodations
- Networking with community members to identify potential programs for rural Kansans with disabilities
- Sharing this valuable information with colleagues

Improving assessment and documentating needs for patients with disabilities, and recognizing their individual levels of ability; then helping them meet their defined goals on their terms

Participants also saw opportunities for improvement in their practices or organizations, such as:

- Being more aware of patient's needs and of disabilities, then addressing barriers to meeting their needs

- Thinking more about people with disabilities remaining healthy, and thinking from their perspective
- Networking with the local community about potential ways to address healthy lifestyles in their area
- Providing appropriate referrals
- Recognizing limitations in current patient care delivery systems and making improvements

Session 2 - Addressing Real-Life Experiences of People with Disabilities involved 43 participants. As in the first session, more than 80% reported that they agreed that the information presented positively affected their ability to function as part of a team. Likewise, 78% reported they learned something that they could take back to their team to improve outcomes. Strategies participants noted they would implement as result of the webinar included:

- Active listening
- Be more cognizant of barriers encountered by persons with disabilities
- Speak directly to the patient
- Use appropriate humor when engaging

Opportunities for improvement in their practices or organizations included:

- Asking patients more questions for clarification on their condition/disability

- Changing communication strategies to ensure everyone understands
- Asking more questions, being more personable
- Increasing knowledge on physical and medical barriers for patients with disabilities
- Need for scales for weighing and exam tables for patients using wheelchairs

Session 3 - Creating an Accessible Health Care

Environment engaged with 42 participants, 78% of whom agreed the information positively affected their ability to function as part of a team, and 84% that they learned something they could take back to their team to improve outcomes. Participants also highly rated Session 3 for these disability-specific survey questions:

- 94% reported that the webinar helped them recognize barriers in practice settings for patients with disabilities
- 90% reported that the webinar helped them identify resources to assist with barrier removal
- 100% of participants reported that the content of this session was applicable to their profession

Strategies they planned to implement as result of the webinar included:

- Advocacy for individuals when the ADA is not being implemented
- Bringing environmental barriers to the attention of those who can make changes
- Doing an equipment check for physician’s practice to ensure access
- Verbiage changes — say “accessible parking” instead of “handicapped parking”
- Information on ADA and diagrams pertaining to accessibility are extremely helpful

Opportunities for improvement they would use in their practices or organizations were:

- Providing feedback to providers on potential barriers to members with disabilities
- Ensuring providers are meeting ADA requirements.
- Improving personal communication style
- Lower counters for patient check-in
- Different formats for printed materials
- Wheelchair accessible scales

Session 4 - Navigating Medicare, Medicaid, and Employment for Patients with Disabilities wrapped up the series with 36 participants, 79% of whom reported that they agree that the information presented positively affected their ability to function as part of a team; and 86% reported they learned something that they can take back to their team to improve outcomes. At this point in the series they repeated many of the previously mentioned strategies and opportunities for improvement. Some of the final comments and ideas they mentioned included:

- Great information regarding Medicare and Medicaid and qualifying incomes
- We need to ensure we are educated on the possible benefits for consumers, and have a better understanding of the role that Medicaid Expansion could provide
- Make more referrals to Working Healthy Program and to community resources
- Understanding of the resources available for people to allow for greater independence and involvement in the community

Finally, as one participant said, “This information is not widely known and understood (by) providers in this agency so I think sharing the information with colleagues and other providers will be important.”

Sustaining Success

Plans are underway to continue the partnership with AHEC to provide more professional continuing education on topics related to the health and well-being of people with disabilities.

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