TARGETS FOR 2020

- low-income age 50 and above served: 700 evaluations to determine PEARLS’ social and financial impact
- social isolation for participants
- cost effectiveness for program delivery

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The University of Washington’s Health Promotion Research Center will conduct two evaluations to expand the evidence-base for the Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS). The goal of the evaluation is to understand PEARLS’ impact on objective and subjective measures of social isolation, and on economic factors such as health services utilization/costs and transitions to nursing homes. The evaluation will also consider how PEARLS works:

- In various organizations and settings
- In community-based organizations around the country
- With different staffing models and population mixes
- To impact person-centered outcomes such as self-efficacy and quality of life

Additionally, the project will provide key evidence for expanding PEARLS in existing markets and into other markets such as integrated health care for greater financial and social impact.

“While we know that the program is effective at treating late-life depression, this AARP Foundation-funded project will allow us to better understand the effect of PEARLS on other important outcomes, including health services utilization, transition to nursing homes, and social isolation. Knowing more about these financial and social impacts is key for helping to scale and sustain PEARLS by opening the door for new partnerships, funders, providers, and communities.”

—Lesley Steinman, Research Scientist at UW Health Promotion Research Center

AARP Foundation
Learn more at aarpfoundation.org
PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Quality Indicators:** Current healthcare quality improvement measures such as the Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) encourage regular depression screening, referral, and treatment for better outcomes. PEARLS’ strong evidence base can assist health systems and insurers in meeting the indicators for improvement in depressive symptoms five to seven months post-screening.

- **Pilot Study:** Prior to completing their nationwide social isolation evaluation, the UW Health Promotion Research Center will implement a pilot with 20 PEARLS participants to test their demographic and social isolation instruments. The pilot will also allow for refinement of recruitment strategies and data collection methodology.

“I probably wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for PEARLS. I was struggling to find a reason to stick around, you know? Now, I find some joy in every day and try to reach out more socially; that’s huge for me!” —PEARLS participant

“It gave me a different way to look at things in my life . . . I learned to break big problems into small tasks that I could tackle one at a time in baby steps.” —PEARLS participant

EVIDENCE BASE

**Independent Evaluation**

The effectiveness of PEARLS for older adults living in the community was tested through a randomized control trial (RCT) from 1999 to 2003 (Ciechanowski, 2004, *JAMA*). The RCT found that individuals treated with PEARLS were three times as likely to experience a reduction in their depressive symptoms as those not treated with PEARLS.

**National Registries**

PEARLS is recognized in several national registries of evidence-based programs for older adult health promotion, including the Substance Abuse Mental Health and Services Administration’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Innovations Exchange, and the Administration on Community Living’s Title III D Highest Tier for Aging and Disability Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.

**CDC Prevention Research Center**

The Health Promotion Research Center (HPRC) is one of three original Prevention Research Centers funded by the CDC in 1986. Based at the University of Washington School of Public Health, the HPRC is part of a network of academic-community partnerships around the country who are translating community-based research results into policy and practice.

ABOUT PEARLS

The Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS) is an evidence-based intervention for older adults with depression that uses problem-solving treatment and behavioral activation strategies at home or other accessible community settings.

pearlsprogram.org

ABOUT AARP FOUNDATION

AARP Foundation works to ensure that low-income vulnerable older adults have nutritious food, affordable housing, a steady income, and strong and sustaining social bonds. We collaborate with individuals and organizations who share our commitment to innovation and our passion for problem-solving. Supported by vigorous legal advocacy, we create and advance effective solutions that help struggling older adults transform their lives. AARP Foundation is the charitable affiliate of AARP.