

in the program were conducted with 24 participants. Respondent feedback indicated that those with limited mobility and fewer social connections reported the greatest benefit. Many identified the value of journaling as a form of recordkeeping for family members, but reported varying degrees of journal completion. Suggestions for improvement included future facilitation of two-way communication with other participants and opportunities for face-to-face interaction in group settings.

LONELINESS AND ASSOCIATED OUTCOMES IN A LARGE SURVEY OF OLDER ADULTS

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Loneliness and social isolation are major risk factors for poor physical and mental health among older adults. Studies demonstrate that loneliness is associated with depression, impaired cognitive performance, increased chronic disease, and mortality. However, the impact on other psychosocial constructs and healthcare outcomes remain understudied. The purpose of this study was to estimate the prevalence of loneliness and examine associations with socio-demographic, medical, and psychosocial characteristics in a large national survey of older adults (N=4,525). Overall, 43% of participants reported either moderate or severe loneliness. Older age, female gender, income, depression, hearing difficulty, and poorer health were all associated with loneliness. Purpose of life, resilience, optimism, and a diverse social network were associated with low loneliness. On average, lonely participants had a higher rate of emergency department visits, inpatient admissions, and medical costs. Based on findings, interventions should aim to alleviate loneliness among older adults.

ONLINE MINDFULNESS PROGRAM FOR LONELY OLDER ADULTS

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Mindfulness meditation is a cognitive state of self-awareness that promotes emotional regulation and change in self-perspective. Mindfulness has been applied to address loneliness, stress, and anxiety, demonstrating consistent health benefits. The purpose of this study was to test the feasibility of an online mindfulness program and to measure its impact on well-being among lonely older adults. The intervention consisted of seven one-hour weekly online modules led by a trained facilitator via WebEx. Engagement was high with 63% of participants attending four or more sessions. Pre/post survey data (N=42) found decreased anxiety, stress, and improvement in mindfulness, purpose in life, and resilience. This program demonstrates that online mindfulness programs may be of great benefit for lonely older adults. Future research will include larger samples to investigate further impacts.

REDUCING LONELINESS AMONG OLDER ADULTS WITH ANIMATRONIC PETS

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Pet ownership has been examined as a solution for loneliness. However, multiple challenges of pet ownership exist for older adults. Therefore, research efforts are considering the use of animatronic pets to reduce loneliness. The purpose of this study was to determine if ownership of animatronic pets would decrease loneliness and improve well-being among lonely older adults. Individuals were identified as lonely through a prior survey. Participants were provided with their choice of either an animatronic cat or dog and completed T1, T2, and T3 surveys. Response rates were high; 167 (63%) completed T1 and T2, and 125 (48%) also completed T3. T2 data indicated that loneliness decreased, while mental well-being, resilience, purpose in life, and optimism improved. At T3 mental well-being and purpose and life continued to improve. Animatronic pets appear to provide significant benefits for the well-being of lonely older adults.

SESSION 1020 (SYMPOSIUM)

BUILDING NETWORKS TO ADDRESS AT-RISK OLDER ADULTS

Chair: Max Zubatsky, *Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, United States*

Discussant: Nina Tumosa, *Health Resources and Services Administration, Rockville, Maryland, United States*

With the rise of older adults and the number of chronic health issues in this population, comes the need for greater collaboration across organizations and health care settings. Age-friendly health systems offer the benefits of providing the best care possible to individuals and families, connect people to specific community resources, and optimize the best access to services and programs. The Gateway Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) has combined the efforts of Saint Louis University and a rural, critical access hospital to establish a care network across Missouri. Together, this partnership has created a number of services, initiatives, and projects to help older adults maintain independence and offer families ways to take of their loved ones in more effective ways. In this symposium, presenters from Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy, Geriatric Medicine, Psychology and Nursing disciplines will introduce several areas of this age-friendly network. The four abstracts for this symposium include: 1.) Assessing At-Risk Older Adults through the Rapid Geriatric Assessment, 2.) Cognitive Stimulation Therapy for Individuals with Memory Loss, 3.) Predictors of Falls in Older Adults Across Partner Settings, and 4.) Development of program initiatives such as the Rapid Geriatric Assessment screening, Cognitive Stimulation Therapy, Falls Assessment in Seniors, and Care for Persons with Dementia in their Environments will be covered in detail. At the end of the four presentations, the presenters will highlight the importance of