STORY CIRCLES AS A METHODOLOGY: A PILOT STUDY EXPLORING COGNITIVE PROBLEMS IN AGING

Logan A. Sweeder,1 Nikki Hill,1 Emily Whitaker,1 Anushka Tiwari,1 and William Doan1, 1. The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, United States

A Story Circle refers to a group of individuals in a comfortable social environment sharing personal experiences through stories to explore problems shared by a community and facilitate artistic representation of experiences of interest. In this pilot study, we examined the feasibility of Story Circles to facilitate qualitative inquiry of the experience of cognitive problems among older adults. A convenience sample of six cognitively intact, community-dwelling older adults (M=72.5; SD=5.09 years; 83% female) with self-reported cognitive complaints participated in a 90-minute Story Circle as well as a follow-up phone call. Each shared a personal story of experiencing a cognitive complaint and related these experiences to those shared by others in relation to a prompt provided by the group facilitator. Participants reported enjoying the Story Circle experience (M=8.5/10; 10 = extremely positive) and interest in participating in future Story Circles (M=9.3/10; 10 = extremely likely). Common themes included a sense of community established during the group that persisted after its conclusion as well as a normalization of the experience of occasional cognitive problems. Story Circles may be a useful data collection method to enhance understanding of complex phenomena within a social context.

SESSION 3300 (POSTER)
EDUCATION AND TRAINING

THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL HEALTH NETWORKS

Anna Faul,1 Mona Huff,1 Samantha G. Cotton,1 Pamela Yankeelov,1 Joe D’Ambrosio,1 and Megan Austin1, 1. University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, United States

Stress and compassionate fatigue are common among graduate level students working in healthcare professions, however, few studies focus on preventative self-care and its’ impact on these learners. As part the University of Louisville’s Behavioral Health Workforce Enhancement Training Program (BHWET), graduate students are trained to work with older adults in rural communities. The focus of our BHWET program is to provide holistic, behavioral health care through our FlourishCare Network. As part of the student’s weekly curriculum, an interdisciplinary group of learners from counseling psychology, social work and psychiatric nursing were invited to the attend the sessions were invited to participate in a 2-semester Microclinics and Health Matters course that was designed to promote self-care and harness the power of social networks to promote health. A total of 15 students completed the program. Biomarkers including BMI, Cholesterol, A1C, Blood Pressure were taken every week the course was offered. Cortisol levels were taken every 4 months to measure stress levels. Across the initial 12 weeks of programming, there were positive outcomes for the participants in terms of either maintenance of healthy goals or biomarkers. Additionally, the program had an impact on the older adult clients that were being served by the students compared to students that did not participate. In a review of the plan of care items, which is central to our work with FlourishCare clients, plan of care items showed a stronger focus on connecting clients to social health interventions and a stronger connection to education about health-related content.

FACTORS PROMOTING CONTINUED LIFELONG LEARNING: FOCUS ON THE PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT IN JAPAN

Chiharu Yasuzato,1 and Keiko Katagiri1, 1. Graduate School of Human Development and Environment, Kobe University, Kobe, Hyogo, Japan

Lifelong learning of older people is categorized as social participation. Most studies on social participation have examined the motivation to start; however, those on continuing participation are few. This study aimed to identify the factors promoting continued lifelong learning among older adults, focusing on both personal and socio-relational factors. To do this, in-depth semi-structured interviews were
conducted with 20 Japanese citizens, aged 60-75, with a learning experience of more than 3 years. Results showed that both personal and socio-relational factors matter. First, personal factors include older adults’ past learning experience, access to learning in the present, and work status. Past learning experience relates to their perception as students and their memories of learning during school age. Regarding accessibility, classes within walking distance, for example, would help in continuation of learning, especially for people with health problems. People may choose to become involved in learning activities after retiring from the workforce and they have time to spend. Second, the importance of socio-relational factors was evident in how family supported older people by accepting how important learning was for them and offering them rides to the classes. Within the class, they can share information about the happenings and activities in their community, become mentors, and stimulate each other. The instructor enhances their enthusiasm to learn and provides a comfortable learning space. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that while there is no single condition, a person-environment fit promotes older adults continued learning.

PROMOTING AND ATTRACTING STUDENTS TO CAREERS IN AGING SERVICES
Melinda Heinz,1 1. Upper Iowa University, Fayette, Iowa, United States

Three student focus groups were conducted at residential, center, and online university locations (N = 15) to investigate interest and understanding of careers in gerontology and exposure to aging issues. Students majoring in health services administration, psychology, and human services were recruited and given an honorarium for participating. Sessions were recorded and transcribed with two researchers independently coding to identify themes. Center and online participants were more likely to be non-traditional students. Eighty-seven percent of participants were female, 13 percent were male. Ages ranged from 19 to 34 (M = 23.4). Eighty-seven percent were upperclassmen. This study is unique as most research has investigated aging issues with traditional aged students. Center students reported aging issues were discussed in courses outside of their majors, whereas residential students stated issues did not receive attention outside of gerontology classes. Online students stated discussions depended on the class. Common deterrents for not considering careers in gerontology were concerns about performing “physical cares” or coping with death anxiety. Few considered what a career in gerontology looked like outside of nursing homes. To increase awareness, some students felt “gerontology classes should be mandatory.” Students felt taking field trips to modern nursing homes “changed their perspective,” from medical model facilities. All participants reported little exposure to older adults or gerontology as a viable career path in high school. With the rapidly aging population, we suggest incorporating a “Careers in Aging” unit in high schools to increase awareness of gerontology opportunities.

TRAINING SENIOR VOLUNTEERS TO IMPLEMENT A GROUP MUSIC INTERVENTION FOR PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA
Silvia Orsulic-Jeras,1 Sarah Nicolay,1 and Cristen Kane2, 1. Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging, Cleveland, Ohio, United States, 2. RSVP of Lake County, Willoughby Hills, Ohio, United States

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a national program with many regional offices that offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for seniors. Research demonstrates the importance of volunteering and social participation on the well-being, health and longevity of older individuals. Further, studies of RSVP volunteers have demonstrated marked improvement in their perceived physical, mental health and quality of life (McDonald et al., 2013). Little evidence exists, however, supporting the effectiveness of using senior volunteers to assist with or even lead activities programming for persons with dementia (PWDs). Seniors Making Connections through Music, a group program designed to engage persons in the moderate to advanced stages of dementia, included the training of 21 RSVP volunteers to lead or assist with the program. Volunteers were mostly female (95%) and educated (80% college/advanced degree), with more than half reporting professional or personal experiences with dementia (62%). Data were gathered through structured interviews and post-session debrief meetings. Findings suggest volunteers felt they were able to use existing knowledge and experience, received good and helpful supervision, and reported increased knowledge of dementia after volunteering for the group. Other results summarize: Volunteer satisfaction with program, role, tools and materials used, the program’s impact on the community, and willingness to volunteer for the program in the future. Programmatic features, training protocols, and the impact of using retired senior volunteers to strengthen program sustainability will be discussed. Volunteer testimonials and video demonstrations will also be shared.

REDUCING OPIOID OVERDOSE RISK IN A COMMUNITY CARE COORDINATION CLINIC: RICHMOND HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM
Faika A. Zanjani,1 Marshall Brooks,1 Leland Waters,2 Pamela Parsons,1 and Patricia Slattum1, 1. Virginia Commonwealth, Richmond, Virginia, United States, 2. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, United States

Objective Opioid safety is increasingly important in the care of older adults due to higher risk for negative opioid-related outcomes related to higher prevalence of chronic pain, multimorbidity, polypharmacy, and age-associated changes in drug metabolism and elimination. Evidence-based practices for screening and safe opioid use for older adults are needed. Our project aims to develop, implement, and evaluate a care-coordination workflow and interprofessional clinical opioid misuse screening, support, and referral training to support older adult care. Methods Our research occurs in context of the Richmond Health and Wellness Program (RHWP), a community-based interprofessional care coordination initiative, with interprofessional faculty and students providing on-site integrated care to residents in low-income senior housing communities. Curriculum development, and interprofessional clinical faculty, peer support, and health professions student training have been conducted. Results will discuss the findings from the health professions student training. Findings The Opioid Overdose Risk Reduction Curriculum was delivered via Blackboard and