

Quality of Life and Health Disparities

Quality of Life

Quality of life (QOL*) issues, as they pertain to the patient, family member, and caregiver, can be extremely complex. QOL encompasses rehabilitation of the patient recovering from a stroke or heart attack, and includes any co-existing or recurring mental health conditions which make recovery more complicated. Likewise, the QOL for the family member or caregiver of a heart disease* or stroke* survivor can be greatly affected. Psychological, spiritual, and social stress can all affect the caregiver and survivor at some point, but in different ways.

Physicians should and do monitor and treat the effects CVD have on a patient's QOL. Additionally, public health professionals such as mental health professionals, mental health therapists, nurses, registered dietitians, rehabilitation specialists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and social workers measure a patient's QOL by the successful achievement of short term and long term goals. These goals are designed to return a patient's activities of daily living to a level that is "as close as possible" to the patient's pre-disease state of health. The QOL of Wyoming citizens begins with the prevention of chronic illness and concludes with end of life therapy. Therefore, each chapter in this plan addresses QOL issues either directly or indirectly.

Quality of life is the number one goal of Healthy People 2010. The HP2010 guide states the following: "*The first goal of Healthy People 2010 is to help individuals of all ages increase life expectancy and improve their quality of life*" (www.healthypeople.gov).

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Goal #6

Identify strategies that enhance the quality of life for people affected by CVD.

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Objective I

By 2010, establish a repository of resources available that help enhance the QOL for survivors, family members, and caregivers affected by CVD.

HP2010 Baseline:

HP2010 compiled a list of 28 focus areas to be addressed by the year 2010. Addressing these areas will help improve the QOL for all Wyoming citizens.

Wyoming Baseline:

Currently there is no known single resource dedicated to QOL issues.

Action Plan:

- Measure baseline quality of life awareness levels among public and professionals using established survey tools and existing survey results.
- Conduct a resource audit.
- Conduct gap analysis and repeat every two years.
- Publish results of audit and gap analysis.
- Establish a website and post links to resources that professionals and the public in Wyoming can use to access information regarding quality of life issues.
- Partner with the American Heart Association, the American Stroke Association, physicians, hospitals, clinics, and other state level prevention programs to increase the awareness and availability



of resources that educate and enhance the quality of life for persons affected by heart disease, stroke, and peripheral artery disease*.

Health Disparities

Although disparities exist nationwide in heart disease and stroke, Wyoming's small minority population makes it difficult to produce accurate data showing disparities at the state level. Disparities in healthcare is an issue that has divided the public and professional sector for years. Health disparities can include age, gender, race or ethnicity, education or income, disability, geographic location, or sexual orientation. Additionally, Wyoming is largely rural, making it difficult for some populations to access healthcare, whether or not they have health insurance. These types of disparate factors can sometimes limit a person's quality of life related to cardiovascular disease. It is the goal of the Health Disparities work group, through education, awareness, and making resources available to communities and professionals, to reduce disparate areas in healthcare.

It should be noted the Healthy People 2010 reads: *"The second goal of Healthy People 2010 is to eliminate health disparities among segments of the population, including differences that occur by gender, race or ethnicity, education or income, disability, geographic location, or sexual orientation."*



Goal #7

Focus on ways to reduce disparities and other issues, and improve access to healthcare related disparities of people affected by heart disease, stroke, and peripheral artery disease*.

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Objective I

By 2010, increase awareness of services available for communities and professionals that serve minority populations.

HP2010 Baseline:

Healthy People 2010, through the Department of Health and Human Services, maintain a data base of statistical information related to the elements of health disparities (www.healthypeople.gov).

Wyoming Baseline:

Currently, there is no known single information base providing a listing of the available resources in each community. After the completion of the audit and gap analysis described in Goal 6 on the previous page, this information base will be established.

Objective II

Make available culturally sensitive resources for providers and communities throughout the state relating to cardiovascular disease.

HP2010 Baseline:

Many communities in the U.S. are already addressing this issue. Several communities have partnered with the CDC program R.E.A.C.H. 2010 to address the health disparity issue in their community (www.cdc.gov).

Wyoming Baseline:

Currently, the state office of Multicultural Health is working to address the health care disparities that exist in Wyoming.

Action Plan:

Partner with the office of Multicultural Health in their efforts to reduce the health care disparities for heart disease, stroke, and peripheral artery disease. Emphasis should be



placed in the following areas:

- Provide education and mentoring to community health care units.
- Provide community outreach and public information through information seminars, and the use of various media to inform the public.
- Create affiliations and partnerships with state and national organizations dedicated to reducing health disparities.
- Provide administration and oversight to continually update and manage the information website.



References: Quality of Life and Health Disparities

http://www.cdc.gov/reach/community_profiles/index.htm

<http://www.healthypeople.gov>

