Increasing Education on Advance Directive Use for End of Life Care Planning in Thermopolis, Wyoming

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Purpose
This project aims to increase public knowledge of Advance Directives (AD) and the importance of planning for end of life care.

Methods
A literature review was used to identify evidence based methods to increase AD education.
• A multidimensional approach that included an interactive session in addition to educational handouts was shown to increase AD knowledge.
• Having counseling services available to answer questions increased AD completion.
• Community partners with established AD training and active participation with the elderly population were identified.
• Hot Springs County Senior Citizen Center (HSCSCC)
• The Wyoming Pioneer Home for Assisted Living (WPH)
• A community health project was proposed to the partners that would include an interactive oral presentation, educational handouts, AD forms and to establish a counseling service.

Background
• Thermopolis, WY is a rural town in Hot Springs County which serves a population of less than 5,000.
• Thermopolis is a large retirement community due to the mineral springs in Hot Springs State Park.
• Hot Springs County has a very large elder population.
  • HSC: 23% of residents are age 65 or older.
  • Wyoming: 13.5% of the population are age 65 or older.
• Due to the high elder population and the coinciding increase in chronic illness, end of life care planning is an enormously important topic to address.
• From interactions with community members it became apparent that there was a lack of knowledge about AD and reasons why they should be completed.

Results
A presentation with a question and answer session was given at HSCSCC.
• Approximately 55 adults attended the presentation including Senior Center Staff and elder community members.
• An educational brochure and packet on AD were given to attendees and instructed to remain available at HSCSCC and the Red Rock Family Clinic.
• The handouts contained information on:
  • Wyoming specific AD.
  • Reasons why AD are important.
  • How to complete AD.
  • Who to contact with questions.
• HSCSCC and WPH provided AD packets containing further information and forms.
• The associate care coordinator at HSCSCC agreed to become the established counseling provider.

Discussion
• The project successfully increased public education on AD use for end of life care planning. Attendees of the presentation appeared to be very enthusiastic about learning more.
• The established counseling service is this projects greatest strength. This service is expected to increase AD completion.
• The most difficult aspect of the project is to increase education for all adults in Thermopolis.
• Hopefully through elder education, discussions will occur with family members to increase interest in AD and end of life care.
• End of life care planning is incredibly important and promoting the use of AD is a great way to improve public knowledge.

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