Staying alive with ElderTree: Design, use & effect of a computer system for older adults.

David H. Gustafson PhD, Director
Fiona McTavish, Deputy Director
Dhavan Shah, PhD Scientific Director
John Lee, PhD
Jane Mahoney, MD

Center for Health Enhancement Systems Studies
Staying Alive: The Elder Tree Story

Dave Gustafson. Speaking for many, many other colleagues

Milwaukee County

Richland County

Waukesha County

Center for Health Enhancement Systems Studies

Major Funding by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Agenda

- How did we do CBPR? (successes & screw-ups)
- What did we produce? (ElderTree)
- How is it different for older adults?
- How did we evaluate it?
- What are we learning?
- New developments
- How are we disseminating?
Our job:

Use CBPR to:
keep older adults active and independent;
& use technology to do it.
CBPR

Asset-Based Community Development

Assets & challenges identified

Associations; not institutions

Geographic areas selected

Strategy team & community engagement

300 Conversations & asset-mapping
Screw-ups

Competing expectations

Efficiency
Everyone is right

Elders
- Isolation & Loneliness
- Local events
- Transport there

Clinicians
- Falls
- Adherence
- Dementia
- Depression

Outcomes
- Stay in home
- Less admissions
- Quality of life
Elder Tree
ElderTree Features

Conversations
• Public Discussion:
• Private Messages:
• Family and Friends

Information
• Local Resources:
• Bulletin Board:
• Active Living WIKI Tips

Falls Prevention
• Falls Assessment
• Tailored balance exercises

Transportation
• Monitor driving
• Map Your Trip

Personal
• Member Directory:
• Games and Ice breakers
• To-Do List:
• My Health Tracker:

For Clinicians (new)
• Clinician Report
Adaptations for elderly

– Meet us where we are (senior centers)
  • Our hands tremble
  • Coordination diminishes
  • Our eyes are dimmer

– So:
  • Large screen; no mouse (touch screen instead)
  • Keep it simple
  • Anytime training
  • Minimal data collection
Typical CHESS: too complex
Keep it simple

It doesn't work to leap a twenty-foot chasm in two ten-foot jumps. American Proverb
Discussions

- Just Chatting 1 new
- Health & Wellness
- Milwaukee County
- Preventing a Fall
- Religion / Spirituality 1 new
- Caregiving Support
- ElderTree Help
- Peace Tuesday Bible Study Group
What have we learned?

1. Volunteers are great; clear expectations are essential.

2. ABCD increases engagement & may benefit dissemination.

3. ABCD & research have different agendas to reconcile.

4. Focusing on assets—on strengths—can be very helpful.

5. ABCD is expensive and time-consuming.

6. Communication is key.

7. Link to the health care system.

8. Deeply understand your customer (like Tech Team did).
Dissemination
Elder Tree Dissemination

- 53 Counties with 600 members & growing
- 53 Counties w Community Administrators & growing
What’s the purpose of Elder Tree Community Administrators?

- An Elder Tree champion in the community
- Trained and given admin rights to activate new users and create custom groups
- They provide a human touch to the technology

Who are they?

- Senior Center Directors
- Librarians
- Aging professionals
- Church secretaries
- Civic group volunteers
- Social workers
- Meal program staff & volunteers
- Older adult volunteers
Next Steps

- Multiple Chronic Conditions
- Link to clinical team
- American Family – No advertising still
  - Provide Chromebooks and Hotspot
  - Agents give ET to customers.
  - IL, MN, IA and WI.
- United Healthcare???
  - Dual Eligibles
  - WI, OH, AZ, Tx, KS