

Riverdale Senior Services

Senior center provider focus group

6 members of staff (all female)

1. What type of pain problems do you deal with?

- Spinal stenosis
- Low back pain
- Osteoarthritis
- Osteoporosis / Fractures
- Carpal tunnel syndrome pain
- Headaches

The pain affects the seniors in many ways including:

- Impairment of mobility
- Impairment of sleep
- Worsening quality of life
- Increased frequency of falls
- Leads to isolation and depression

2. What services are offered for pain management and what has been effective so far?

- Exercise classes
 - Mainly stretching exercises
 - Walking group
- Yoga
 - The senior center offers sitting yoga, to encourage less mobile seniors to participate
- Tai Chi
- Meditation
 - The only program that is being promoted as helpful in pain relief.
- Counseling
 - Counseling sessions are offered every Friday – “Adjusting to change”
 - Seniors express the idea that pain is something older people have to live with.
- Linkage programs
 - With Riverdale Mental Health
 - Full-time social worker
 - Andria Cassidy helps with medications, discussions about seniors’ pain problems
 - Referral services

- Home care

3. What barriers are there to pain management and how can we overcome them?

- Transportation
- Access in a broader sense – if access is too complicated, seniors won't pursue an activity
- Lack of support system at home
- Scheduling conflicts
- Poor compliance with medications
- Co-morbidities serving as contraindications to the use of some analgesic medications
- Fatalism – perception that a program just won't work
- Reluctance to use assistive devices (don't want to be vulnerable, don't have the patience to learn how to use them)
- Cognitive impairment
- Belief that pain is part of aging / Denial
- Lack of awareness of seniors to availability of pain management options
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of motivation
- Sense of hopelessness
- Some seniors get attached to their pain and use it as an excuse
- Financial issues (i.e. paying instructors to administer yoga, Tai Chi, etc.)

How to overcome some of the barriers:

- Education of physicians, other health professionals and seniors on the issue of pain and treatment options. It would be nice if more physicians referred seniors with pain back to the available programs in the community, e.g. yoga, etc.
- Obtain feedback for pain management programs e.g., surveys before and after sessions.
- Present the available pain management programs as programs which will lead to lifestyle changes.

4. What would people like to have available for pain management? What's ideal?

- Education (explain to the seniors how little is needed to make a difference; educate the providers on pain management options)
- Offer a wide range of regular classes for seniors with different abilities (tailor these to the individual)
- Provide coaching
- Offer accessible programs
- Programs offered should be ongoing
- Financial liberty