

The Church As A Health Place



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Objectives

- Discuss influences on the renewed interest in the relationship between faith and health
- Discuss outcomes of research on the faith and health connection and how these relate to the congregation
- Discuss scriptural perspectives on health, healing, and wholeness
- Develop a personal definition of health
- Describe a framework for health ministry and how health ministry relates to the needs of congregations
- List potential health ministry interventions
- Describe resource “tools” for health ministry

Introduction



- Why do people go to church?
- What do you believe is the role of the church/congregations?
- “The congregation’s central mission is that of health and salvation.” (Wylie & Solari-Twadell, 1999)
- “Keeping people healthy...has become a national priority, and the American church stands in a vital position to help with this effort.” (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001)

Relationship Between Faith and Health



- **Handbook of Religion and Health** (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001): Why is there such a renewed interest in the relationship between faith and health?
 - Religion is important to people, despite many scientific advances
 - Demographic and economic trends (i.e. aging population and rising health care costs)
 - “Health care system”/medicine (i.e. impersonal, costs, lack of “humanness”)

Relationship Between Faith and Health: Primary Research Outcomes

- Respect for the body (Koenig, 1999)
- Healthy lifestyle (Koenig, 1999)
- “Health leaders recognize that future improvements in health will come about only as people assume greater responsibility for their health and for the health of their communities. This is a spiritual problem calling for changes in behavior, not a medical problem calling for a scientific breakthrough.” (Droege, 1995)





Religious Involvement and Positive Health Outcomes

- Regulation of individual lifestyles and health behaviors
- Provision of social resources
- Promotion of positive self-perceptions
- Provision of specific coping resources
- Generation of other positive emotions
- Promotion of health beliefs

– Christopher G. Ellison, Ph.D., & Jeffrey S. Levin, Ph.D.



Scriptural Perspectives on Health, Healing, and Wholeness

■ Old Testament

- Deuteronomomic Cycle--sickness result of disobedience; healing related to forgiveness
- Leviticus--dietary and moral proscriptions (health promotion & disease prevention)
- God was the source of healing and wholeness; prophets and priests were only channels for healing

Scriptural Perspectives



■ New Testament

- Health, healing and wholeness were at the heart of Jesus' ministry
- Jesus ministered to the whole person-- body, mind, and spirit
- Jesus' followers were empowered to be instruments of God's healing (John 14:12)



A congregation that takes health ministry serious is:

- **A wellness center:** prayer, worship, social interaction, discussions of life and death issues from a faith perspective
- **A spiritual people:** learning about our values and beliefs, our Creator, and our daily relationship with God
- **A caring, relational community:** minister to each other in times of sorrow and illness, and celebrate with each other in times of joy and thanksgiving
- **A healing community:** developing and implementing plans for bringing health and healing to the greater community, beginning with the congregation



Framework for Health Ministry

- Health promotion--focus on healthy human development and lifestyles
- Disease prevention--lowering risk factors and reducing incidence of illness/disease
- Response--actions taken to address actual or potential problems which can affect health and healing (Solari-Twadell, 1997)
- Stewardship to the congregation and community

Framework for Health Ministry

- Pastoral perspectives on the roles of the church in health, healing, and wholeness:
 - Spiritual role
 - Health promotion role
 - Resource role
 - Supportive role
 - This information is based on surveys from 28 pastors in a southeastern metropolitan area





Framework for Health Ministry

- “The church...is increasingly seeing its task as related to keeping people well. Many people, without realizing it, look to their church as their ‘health place.’ They attend worship Sunday after Sunday because they find there a message of hope and, yes, salvation. It keeps them motivated to want to live a meaningful life.” (Westberg, 1982)
- See “The Congregation as a Health Place” handout



Congregation's Needs Related to Health Ministry

- There is a connection of spirituality and faith to basic questions of:
 - the meaning of life
 - the meaning of suffering and illness
 - the meaning of death
 - how one's values and beliefs impact their behaviors and health: values placed on health serve as a standard for health related decision making (Matheus, 1994).



Congregation's Needs Related to Health Ministry

- Education for healthy self-care
 - healthy lifestyle education
 - facilitate motivation for and sustainment of behavioral changes
 - health promotion across the life span
 - “Most illnesses come on slowly. It is as if our bodies are trying to tell us something--something about how our way of looking at life, or our way of handling life's many problems, is making us sick. If a great deal of illness is related to our way of looking at life--our outlook on life, our philosophy of life--then, of course, religious institutions must be integrated into the health care system.” (Westberg, 1999)



Congregation's Needs Related to Health Ministry

- Education for informed decisions about health care choices and options (personal and family health care options; options in crisis situations)
- Support and affirm health care personnel
- Advocacy for “fair and just” access, cost, and allocation of health care resources (Evans, 1995)

Health Ministry Interventions

- Prayer, worship, and healing services
- Education
 - Individuals and groups
 - **integration of faith and health**
 - maintaining a healthy lifestyle
 - changing patterns of behavior in support of a healthy lifestyle
 - making informed health care decisions
 - living with chronic disease
 - healthy aging
 - living with dying
 - health care professionals (role in and support of health ministry)





Health Ministry Interventions

- Advocacy and support programs
 - To raise consciousness regarding the needs of vulnerable and disenfranchised populations
 - To foster mutual understanding, empathy, and empowerment (as in support groups)
 - To provide direct assistance
 - See Matthew 25:31-46

Health Ministry Interventions

- Personal health counseling
- Referrals
- Health screenings
- See lists of ministry opportunities/interventions
- “The primary functions of any congregation are teaching, preaching, fellowship, worship, service and advocacy; each has a role in health.” (Solari-Twadell, 1997)





Diabetes in Alabama

- Alabama is one of six states with a diabetes rate greater than 10 percent, per the CDC
- Dramatic increases in diabetes occurred largely in the South and Southwest, where rates tripled or more than doubled
- Alabama surpassed 11 percent
- Alabama saw a 140 percent increase in diabetes diagnoses among adults between 1995 and 2010, going from a diabetes rate of 4.7 percent in 1995 to 11.3 percent in 2010.
- The United States saw an 82.2 percent increase in that time
- Alabama was one of 18 states to see an increase of greater than 100 percent in that time.



Health Ministry Resources

- Resource “tools” for planning and implementing a health ministry
 - Health needs & assets assessments
 - Spiritual gifts surveys
 - Volunteers’ time, talents, life experiences
 - Community health resources
 - Mission and priorities of the congregation
 - Specific program needs
 - Partnerships and sharing of resources

Possibilities for Change....

- Nutritional Classes



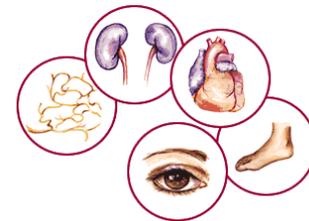
- Walking/Exercise Groups



- Accountability Support Groups



- Diabetes Educational Classes





Cardiovascular Health in Alabama

Race or Ethnicity	Total Cardiovascular Disease Death Rate per 100,000	
	State	National
All Race	568.3	428.4
Black (Non-Hispanic)	649.6	559.8
White (Non-Hispanic)	556.3	432
Hispanic	211.4	313.5
American Indian and Alaskan Native	200.1	391.5
Asian and Pacific Islander	123.4	253.4



Cardiovascular Disease in Alabama

Alabama County Statistics

Total Cardiovascular Disease Death Rate per 100,000, All Race, All Gender, 2013-2015

County	State	Value	Category Range
<u>Shelby</u>	AL	391.3	391.3 - 553.9 (14)
<u>Montgomery</u>	AL	522.3	391.3 – 553.9 (14)
<u>St. Clair</u>	AL	560.2	554 – 585.4 (13)

CDC, 2017

Possibilities for CV Care in Church

- Search Your Heart Program
- Blood Pressure Clinics
- Healthy Eating Classes
- Smoking Cessation Clinics
- Support Groups
- Accountability Partners



QUIT





So Now What?

- What are your community churches doing for health?
- What MORE can be done?
- What obstacles are in the way?
- What kind of difference COULD be made with a combined effort?
- ANYTHING you do is better than nothing!



Summary

- Congregations play an integral role in whole person health--physical, emotional, and spiritual.
- Scripture provides congregations with a framework for health ministry--health promotion, disease prevention, response, and stewardship.
- Congregations are in a position to help people discover how their faith, values, and beliefs impact their health and health behaviors.
- Ministry opportunities/interventions are based on both needs and resources.



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