

University of
Washington

NORTHWEST
GERIATRIC
EDUCATION CENTER
School of Medicine
Division of Gerontology
& Geriatrics

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Associate Director

Michael V. Vitiello, PhD

Education Outreach

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Gerontology & Geriatrics

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NWGEC EXPANDS DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM

The University of Washington's NWGEC is in the process of expanding its successful Distance Learning Program in Geriatric Health Promotion (DLP-GHP) in several important ways.

The overarching goal of the DLP-GHP is to provide community-based healthcare professionals in the field of aging with state-of-the-art knowledge in geriatric health promotion in a convenient, individualized and self-paced manner. The program, in place for some eighteen months, is a 40-hour self-study in which participants choose to master 10 topics from the Center's extensive Geriatric Health Promotion curriculum module series of 31 separate titles, available on-line at www.nwgec.org. Upon successful completion of 10 modules, participants receive a Geriatric Health Promotion certificate.

Choosing topics from the module series allows participants to tailor their learning experience for their specific needs and interests. Modules contain background information on specific topics as well as health promotion strategies and techniques, challenges to success, case studies, resources and references. Many also contain assessment form, rating scales and other materials to assist community-based providers in establishing efficacious health promotion programs. Since its inception, 28 practitioners have registered for the program with 11 completing the program and receiving their certifications.

Building on this early success, the NWGEC is taking steps to expand the DLP-GHP by adding to the current program the opportunity to earn either continuing medical or nursing education credits, and by increasing the programs out-reach through a telecommunications interactive lecture series.

The NWGEC is working with the American Academy of Family Practitioners and the University of Washington School of Nursing so that it can offer the possibility of 40 hours of either CME or CNE credit to participants in the DLP-GHP.



In addition, the NWGEC is collaborating with **Eastern Washington Area Health Education Center/WSU Extension**, to produce a ten-part Geriatric Health Promotion teleconference series. The series will consist of ten 90-minute lecture/question and answer periods, each based on a NWGEC curriculum module and presented by a NWGEC teaching faculty member. Each presentation will be produced in Seattle through the University of Washington School of Medicine's Telehealth Services and cabled through the Inland Northwest Health Services (INHS) network to healthcare practitioners at 27 rural healthcare facilities throughout eastern Washington. The teleconference series will include the option to obtain CME/CNE credits in a manner analogous to that planned for the NWGEC's expanded DLP-GHP. Although this more structured and formalized approach will not allow for the self-chosen content and self-paced learning of the NWGEC's current DLP, the opportunity to provide state-of-the-art health promotion training to a large number of geriatric healthcare practitioners simultaneously across a large geographic area is clearly one the NWGEC could not afford to ignore.

While both of these distance learning expansion efforts are nascent, each fits well within the NWGEC's key mission of training rural healthcare providers in geriatric health promotion and disease prevention. The Center is confident that both efforts will be successful and in the near future will become regular components of the NWGEC's Distance Learning Program in Geriatric Health Promotion.

Long-time NWGEC Associate Director Retires

The big news this summer at the University of Washington's Northwest Geriatric Education Center was the retirement on July 31 of the NWGEC's long-time Associate Director, Susan Guralnick, M.A. Sue's professional background was in clinical audiology with a specialty in age-related hearing loss.

Sue joined the NWGEC in 1986, served as Training and Educational Outreach Coordinator for six years and assumed the role of Associate Director in 1992. As Associate Director, she was responsible for the Center's day-to-day activities, which included planning and conducting health promotion programs, identifying consultants, commissioning and editing curriculum modules and grant-writing.

Sue was instrumental in the development of the NWGEC's Curriculum Module Series. This series of some twenty-five modules, each written by a recognized expert in that particular health care topic, is designed to provide community-based professionals in the field of aging with a set of self-study guides to assist them in developing and establishing various health promotion interventions to prevent disease and/or postpone further disability in the older adults they serve. The Curriculum Module Series also serves as the keystone in the NWGEC's nascent distance learning efforts.

Finally, Sue's responsibilities for, and impact on, geriatric health care education stretched far beyond the state of Washington, as the NWGEC also serves as a regional resource for such educational efforts in the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

Her contributions to geriatric health care education in the Northwest have been exceptional and her retirement leaves a gap not easily filled. All of the many who worked with her over the years wish her the best in this exciting new phase of her life.

Introducing Professor Michael V. Vitiello, new Associate Director of the NWGEC . . .

With the retirement of Susan Guralnick, M.A., the NWGEC's new Associate Director is Michael V. Vitiello, Ph.D. Dr. Vitiello is a Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington School of Medicine. He also holds adjunct faculty appointments in the Department of Biobehavioral Nursing and Healthcare Systems, UW School of Nursing and the Department of Psychology, UW College of Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Vitiello trained as both a neuroscientist and clinical psychologist. His long-standing interests in geriatrics and gerontology include both education and research. Previously one of the NWGEC's long-time curriculum consultant/trainers, Dr. Vitiello has been actively involved in developing and conducting geriatric education and training programs for health care professionals for over ten years. His research focuses on the causes, consequences and treatments of sleep disturbances in older adults. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and The National Institute on Aging (NIA) have funded this work for nearly 25 years. He has authored over 320 scientific publications, and has received two NIMH Independent Scientist Research Career Awards. Dr. Vitiello is also a Fellow in Clinical Medicine of the Gerontological Society of America, a member of the Board of Directors of the Sleep

Research Society, and Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Sleep Medicine Reviews*.

Dr. Vitiello is delighted to assume the stewardship of the NWGEC and looks forward to building upon all the fine work of his predecessor, Susan Guralnick. His immediate plans for NWGEC activities will focus on three major areas. He will work with the geriatric healthcare education communities of Idaho and Wyoming to facilitate their efforts to obtain their own Geriatric Education Centers. He will continue the NWGEC's very well received "Keeping Elders Healthy" regional workshops. Finally, and as a particular focus, he will work to expand the Center's expanding distance learning program into a more accessible web-based format that will include opportunities to obtain both continuing medical and continuing nursing education credits.

Third Annual Alaska Summer Workshop Another Success

The Anchorage BP Energy Center was the July 22nd and 23rd site of a very successful third annual Alaska Summer Workshop: Keeping Elders Healthy, Strategies for Healthcare Providers and Students. Over 110 healthcare providers, many of them working in rural Southeast Alaska, and students interested in healthcare careers attended the workshop. The well received, two-day event consisted of twelve presentations covering topics ranging from "Steps to Healthy Aging" to "Challenges to Aging Families" and provided much needed education about health promotion and disease prevention for older persons in Alaska. The workshop was a collaborative effort between the NWGEC and Anchorage GEC. This is the third year the two GECs have jointly presented a successful health promotion workshop in Alaska. Plans are already underway for another such event in 2005.

Sue Guralnick Says Goodbye . . .

Although many *Viewpoint* readers know that I retired during the summer, I want to officially say good-bye and express my thanks to all my friends and colleagues. My eighteen years at NWGEC, as Training Coordinator for six years, then as Associate Director for twelve years, were filled with many interesting and exciting experiences. Most important, I was privileged to work with talented and dedicated individuals at the University of Washington, in neighboring states and local communities, all dedicated to improving health care and social services for older adults.

I was especially fortunate to be involved in developing the educational materials in NWGEC's Curriculum Module Series. These materials serve as the backbone of NWGEC's education program and have proven useful in group training as well as distance learning self-study guides. During my tenure, I was also able to collaborate with colleagues in neighbor states as they prepared proposals to establish state-based geriatric education centers. My hope is that these products and activities will continue to contribute to the flow of new information to health care and social service providers and ultimately result in improved health outcomes for older adults in the Pacific Northwest.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with you on behalf of older adults. I will miss you all and wish you the very best in your future endeavors.
