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**2005 EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY FINDS NWGEC REGIONAL  
WORKSHOPS ARE BOTH USEFUL AND CHANGE  
GERIATRIC HEALTHCARE PRACTICES**

A major component of the NWGEC's geriatric healthcare continuing education efforts is the Center's regional workshops. These workshops are grassroots in nature. Geriatric healthcare practitioners and educators in rural regions of Washington State are queried regarding their willingness to serve as local organizers for a workshop. If there is sufficient interest, a local organizer is identified who then polls practitioners in their area to determine the workshop topics from the wide number the Center offers that would best suit regional needs. The NWGEC then arranges for its teaching faculty to address five of these topics in an all-day workshop offered at a local facility, often a regional hospital or community college.

Since 2001, the NWGEC has provided geriatric health promotion and disease prevention continuing education to over 1300 participants at 27 of these regional workshops. Participant evaluation of these workshops has been uniformly positive, with evaluations typically falling in the very good to excellent, mid-four, range of a five-point scale, with five anchored as "excellent".

In an effort to evaluate the longer-term impact or "effectiveness" of the Center's workshop series, an effectiveness survey was conducted in June through August of 2005. Questionnaires were mailed to the 342 individuals who attended any of twelve regional workshops given between January 2003 and April of 2005.

A total of 147 participants (43%) returned their questionnaires. This rate of return was quite impressive and was taken as a mark of the positive impact the workshops had on participants. Respondents were from a wide number of healthcare and social service disciplines and worked in varied settings. More than half of them worked in facilities that provided services to more than 500 patients annually and over 70% reported that older patients made up more than half of total patients served. Of older patients served; 58% were described as rural, and large percentages were from minority populations (26% Native American, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5% African American). These figures indicate that Center Workshops are indeed reaching the practitioners they are targeted for; i.e., healthcare and social service practitioners serving rural, minority and underserved older adults.

Respondents reported attending an average of 1.2 workshops. They judged the materials presented in the workshops they attended as "very useful" (4.0 on a 5-point scale). When asked if the knowledge gained changed the way they practice, they answered "somewhat" (3.1 on a 5-point scale). Their reply to whether the changes made improved their practice was similar (3.2 on a 5-point scale).

When asked to provide examples of practice changes made, a wide variety of examples were offered. Some examples are; "insight into how to communicate with native clients", "better understanding of arthritic conditions ...better exercise prescriptions", information on preventive healthcare most useful as I assist my mental health clients with establishing a self-care routine", "awareness of Hispanic culture and its effect

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in delivery of care”, “looking for signs of dementia”, “how to deal effectively with “Yeah, buts””, “better screening for Alzheimer’s”, “redirecting dementia clients”, “better recognizing depression and improving treatment”, “being aware of how questions are asked to minimize confusion”, “helping clients be more aware of hypertension and diabetic problems”, “more sensitivity toward needs of minority elders”, “sleep habits... encourage geriatric patients to spend more time out of bed”, and, “drug interactions very helpful...in recognizing side-effects”.

Finally, when asked, “How likely would you be to attend another NWGEC workshop?”, respondents replied with a highly gratifying “very” (4.0 on a 5-point scale)! The NWGEC will be very pleased to have these repeat “customers” as it continues to offer regional geriatric health promotion workshops throughout the more rural and underserved areas of Washington.

## Appointment With Your Doctor Coming Up ?

### *Get ready:*

- Be prepared: make a list of concerns.
- Take information with you.
- Make sure you can see and hear as well as possible.
- Consider bringing a family member or friend.
- Find an interpreter if you know you’ll need one.
- Plan to update the doctor on what has happened since your last visit.

### *Questions to ask yourself about your symptoms:*

- What exactly are my symptoms?
- Are the symptoms constant? If not, when do I experience them?
- Does anything I do make the symptoms better? Or worse?
- Do the symptoms affect my daily activities? Which ones? How?

### *Giving Information:*

- Share any symptoms.
- Give information about your medications.
- Tell the doctor about your habits.
- Voice other concerns.

### *Making good use of your time:*

- Be honest.
- Decide what questions are most important.
- Stick to the point.
- Share your point of view about the visit.
- Remember, the doctor may not be able to answer all your questions.

### *Questions to ask about medical tests:*

- Why is the test being done?
- What steps does the test involve? How should I get ready?
- Are there any dangers or side effects?
- How will I find out the results? How long will it take to get the results?

- What will we know after the test?

### *Questions to ask about medications:*

- What are the common side effects? What should I pay attention to?
- When will the medicine begin to work?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Should I take it at meals or between meals? Do I need to drink a whole glass of water with it?
- Are there foods, drugs, or activities I should avoid while taking this medicine?

### *Helping you remember:*

- Bring a notepad and take notes.
- Ask if your doctor has any brochures, DVDs, CDs, cassettes or videotapes about your health conditions or treatments.
- Talk to other members of the health care team.

### *Talking to doctors in special situations:*

- Ask questions if you are unclear.
- Try to write down as much information as possible.
- Tell your primary care doctor if you see a specialist, need surgery, or have gone to the emergency room.

### *Practical matters:*

- Don’t hesitate to bring up concerns, even if they don’t seem directly related to a medical conditions.
- Your and your doctor can make better decisions together if the doctor knows about your troubling non-medical concerns.
- If the doctor can’t help solve your non-medical problems, he or she may be able to refer you to other resources that can help.

*“Talking With Your Doctor: A Guide for Older People”, National Institute on Aging, NIH*

## Did You Know . . .

The United Nations estimates that by 2050 the number of people over 60 years old will reach 2 billion?

The value of unpaid activities by older Americans tops \$160 billion per year?

That older women at highest risk for hip fractures are the least likely to get bone density screening?

### **NWGEC’s 2006 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE**

The NWGEC’s Geriatric Health Promotion workshop schedule for the current year is nearing completion. Traditionally the Center gives a workshop in Spokane, two more in Eastern Washington, two in Western Washington, and co-sponsors one in Alaska with that State’s GEC. The dates and locations of the NWGEC’s 2006 workshops as currently scheduled are:

Port Angeles (fifth visit)	March 10, 2006
Wenatchee (second visit)	April 26, 2006
Tri Citities (new location)	May, 2006