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Research & Training Center on Rural Rehabilitation
Montana University Affiliated Rural Institute on Disabilities

COST CONTAINMENT THROUGH DISABILITY PREVENTION: PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A HEALTH PROMOTION WORKSHOP FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

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The Disability Prevention Project at the University of Montana and the University of Kansas has developed and evaluated an eight week workshop and self-help manual that targets the prevention and management of secondary conditions among adults with spinal cord injuries. The preliminary results of this intervention are very encouraging.

Thus far, the workshop has been presented by five independent living centers across Montana and Kansas. The efficacy of these presentations has been evaluated and indicates that consumers who participated in the workshop experienced a **37% decrease in disability due to secondary conditions**, six months after the end of the workshop. Additionally, these same consumers reported a **45% decrease in physician visits** during this same time period. A comparison group of consumers in New Mexico who did not receive the intervention did not demonstrate comparable results.^{(1) (2)}

The workshops were led by independent living center staff who were given a two-day training prior to the intervention. The cost of delivering the workshop is estimated at \$1,500-\$2,000. Based on the cost of physician visits alone, the cost of the interventions in Montana and Kansas was offset in the ten months immediately following the interventions.

The workshop is based on a self-help health promotion model. It includes eight, two-hour sessions that focus on topics including goal setting, problem solving, adopting a hopeful and optimistic attitude, and overcoming depression. In addition, a number of specific behavioral repertoires are taught, including communication skills, medical information seeking skills, changing one's nutritional intake and level of physical activity, and an introduction to advocacy skills.

The workshop highlights the importance of health as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. When people make the effort to increase health behaviors, they enjoy not only improved physical health, but also an increase in overall life satisfaction. In this workshop, increasing one's ability to participate in meaningful activities leads to motivation for adopting health behaviors.

1. ¹ This project is funded by a grant (R04/CCR808519-03-1) from the Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention.

2. ² A technical description of repeated measures anova can be obtained from Craig Ravesloot, Ph.D., **Rural Institute on Disabilities, 52 Corbin Hall, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812; (888) 268-2743**