

HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMITTEE OF THE COA

Meeting Notes

9:30 - 11:00 am

September 6, 2022

ZOOM

In Attendance: Marsha Weber, Neal Brown, Barbara Selter, Marcia Pruzan, Revathi Vikram, Eddie Rivas, David Engel (note taker), Kendell Matthews, Bozena Skraban, Wayne Berman, Betsy Carrier, Virginia Cain

Staff: Tina Purser Langley, Shawn Brennan

Guest Speakers: Phoebe Shih, AAHI, Monique Gardner, AAHP, Anna Marie Izquierdo-Porrera, MD, Phd.

Minutes approved. Motion by Eddie to approve. Seconded by Marsha. Meeting recorded.

Welcome and introductions. Virginia Cain presented the topic of Life Transitions as people age; No one size fits all and each community sees things differently. Three speakers were invited to share the views and provide perspectives on the communities they represent.

Guest Speakers:

Anna Marie Izquierdo-Porrera, MD, Phd. representing the latino community views said there is a big distinction in planning between 1st and 2nd generations (in U.S.) as they age and retire. Many 1st generation elders plan to go back “home” at least for some time during the retirement years. With her clients she discusses care as they age. Many have homes in their origin country. Many have not thought about this topic. It would be important for a CoA finished product be made accessible in multiple languages including Spanish and Portuguese.

Phoebe Shih, representing the Asian American Health Initiative and referred to Asian American and Pacific Islanders community as AAPI said that there are taboos about discussing with family topics such as wills, trusts, power of attorney, and advance directives. AAPI elders do not discuss these things with their adult children when it comes to end of life or dementia. They are not accustomed to paying outsiders to discuss what they consider family matters. That includes financial decisions as well like retirement, 401k's. AAPI prefer to stay (age) at home and see it as disrespectful to discuss care plans. CoA should develop educational materials on these topics in print and online in Chinese, Hindi, Vietnamese, and Korean. The goal being to educate on plan options. This community does not understand assisted living and alternate living situations outside the home.

Monique Gardner, representing the African American Health Program commented the AA community does discuss planning. However, the level of discussions can vary based on education level and depending on whether people are owners or renters. Churches are good vehicles for discussing and communicating issues and to provide education. Many times the family discussions are raised due to an unexpected illness or event. Adult children, grandchildren, caregivers, and primary care providers are all starters of the conversation about life transitions. A taboo about speaking specifically about death or end of life is the result of a strong faith based community.

Decision making regarding transitions are typically by those closest to the senior. These conversations can be about wills, power of attorney and beneficiaries.

To further the conversation, the CoA could partner with Churches, Black Physicians and Healthcare Network (bphnetwork.org), fraternities and sororities.

Question and answers:

Eddie asked whether involving national organizations is a good idea for information sharing and also the local chapters?

Phoebe commented that the best time to provide the information and ideas is when there is no crises.

Anna said she believes in not duplicating work and finding out what is already available such as at the Voice your Choice website (voicetheyourchoice.org) which is available in different languages.

Rev V. asked (regarding AAPI to Phoebe) if there is a difference between generations? The conversation to the older generations should be that it is for “loved ones” and to put their wishes in “writing”. Groups in their 50’s need to encourage older people. When there is an event that triggers the conversation use it as a learning and educating circumstance.

Anna commented that the generational difference is not unique to AAPI. She commented that the discussion should be “this is a gift to the next generation, that honors you as a person”. The conversation needs to be presented differently to the older generation.

Marcia Pruzan brought up that NIA has resources for how to talk to your doctor and how doctors should talk to older patients. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/doctor-patient-communication/talking-with-your-older-patient>

Virginia started the conversation about immigrant elders desire to return home.

Phoebe: AAPI, depends on the country of origin. SE Asians would stay here. Chinese and Korean some might want to leave but not the majority.

Rev: Indian community some might return because it is cheaper in India for 24 hour care.

Bozena: Her parents moved back to Poland because the political situation is better and they could afford a caregiver.

Eddie: Not all countries are safe. His parents could not move back to Guatemala.

Monique: Note that AAHP includes Caribbean Islanders and African countries. Some seniors go back to the islands.

Kendell asked if there are any issues that are OK discussing with caregivers?

Anna: Issues can be discussed if the framework makes them feel comfortable. Create an ongoing dialog with the family and give tips to people. You need to retrain people how to talk about death and loss.

Phoebe: AAPI community does not know how to approach and speak about the topics. You need to make the conversations more normalized. By normalizing and having the discussions, elders will feel more in control of their situations instead of avoiding the topics.

Anna: The CoA needs to help “normalize” the conversations.

Viginia: How does the CoA start with providing materials and initiating the family discussions?

Rev: Need to consider the intergenerational aspect, give power to the seniors and find teaching moments.

Marsha: Who starts the conversation?

Phoebe: AAPI adult children start the conversations because they are the primary care.

Anna presented the concept: Who opens the door? How do you get them to walk through? People do not know what to say when the door is opened.

Barbara: Medical schools are behind in teaching the concepts to med students.

Kendell: Most primary care doctors do ask about advance directives.

---- voiceyourchoice.org has materials.

Monique: Elders do open the door... you hear “what is this (my illness) going to look like if it continues?” The primary care team needs to assist to answer. Anna countered that you cannot “professionalize” the approach. Rev agreed.

Eddie: The family dynamics need to be considered and are important to how the CoA should address the issues.

Marcia: Public health starts with first steps and you cannot expect to hit everyone you need to hit on the first attempt.

Wayne: Financial aspect is also important.

Anna: Where medical aspects are about trust, financial planning has to do with questions about loss.

Discussion about the actual costs of dying including burials and having funerals in a different country. Virginia added a footnote to keep property in other countries in mind.

Phoebe: People in their 50’s will talk about retirement planning. Older people do not want to talk about it. The concept of putting it in writing is fearful – they do not want others to know their wishes. There does need to be education on options for care – ie nursing homes. Most adult children assume home care for their parents.

Virginia: What are the issues around staying in the home or not?

Anna: Latinos think poorly about nursing homes and assisted living (they are not a viable option) because the language barrier is a big deal and leads to isolation. Most of the time the family conversation is “whose house will you live in?” and “who is taking care of mom, when?”

Monique: Agree that the family situation is often “who will come to the senior’s home?” But in the AA community, it does depend on the family’s financial means.

Rev: The emotional strain is great on the family taking care of elders in the home and it is hard for older children to be taking care of even older adults.

It is agreed that the topic is very personal as many have personal experiences with the caring for older adults.

Barbara feels it is a critical issue for the CoA to dig into.

Anna is working on the “The Last Gift” podcast in 4 languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan.

Eddie: The Communications Committee should partner with H & W on the Transition Planning final product distribution and dissemination of information. Need to take the time to provide the results in multi-media.

New Business:

Marsha will distribute the Public Forum document/report for discussion by the EC and determine next steps.

Next H & W meeting is 10-4-22.

Meeting adjourned 11:10 am.