

Chronic Illness in an Aging Population

Chronic health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and arthritis, can lead to a decreased quality of life and impact a senior's ability to live independently if left unmanaged.

Chronic illnesses are costly both to the senior and the health care system.

Why it is important

- Most seniors will have to manage one or more chronic diseases. The percentage of Broome County elders with two or more chronic diseases increases with age:

62% of those 65-74
76% of those 75-84
82% of those 85+

- Chronic illness increases the number of visits to doctors and other health care professionals, thus impacting Medicare, Medicaid and private health insurance costs.
- Seniors are likely to live alone and have fewer financial

resources to purchase care. They are more likely to have mobility problems related to driving and walking and need assistance to keep needed medical appointments.

Primary Focus

Aging Futures is focusing on two conditions: hypertension (or high blood pressure) and depression. These were chosen after reviewing prevalent health conditions, existing services and areas of highest need.

Controlling Hypertension

- 58.4% of Broome older adults surveyed by Mathematica reported having hypertension; this is greater than the national average (36%).
- A hypertension screening program is promoting the use of home monitoring systems and provides follow-up and counseling. The goal is improved self-management and

reduced incidence of stroke.

Treating Depression

- Studies report that 25% to 33% of persons with other chronic health conditions - such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and arthritis - show signs of depression.
- Depression is a serious illness associated with functional decline and is often ignored.
- More than 80% of people with depression can be treated successfully with medication, psychotherapy or a combination of both.

As seniors age, it becomes more likely they will experience health related problems and suffer one or more chronic conditions. Helping them to manage these conditions is one of the most cost effective and best preventative measures our community can take.