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Faith-Based Collaboration to Improve Depression & Self-Compassion in the Elderly: A DNP Project

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Abstract

Faith-based organizations are in a position to improve mental health outcomes for the elderly. With the help of the Community Wellness Center at Our Lady of Fatima (OLF) Catholic Church in Wilton, Connecticut, a new action plan was implemented to accomplish this goal. The proposed DNP Project was an evidence-based, multi-factorial intervention to improve self-compassion and reduce risk for depression for the elderly in the community. It consisted of four structured group sessions over a 6-week period with each session lasting 45 minutes. The group meetings offered evidence-based strategies to improve mental health including: (1) purposeful spiritual counseling utilizing verses from the Bible; (2) art painting; (3) music appreciation, and (4) exercise program with nutritional counseling. Data was collected pre and post intervention to measure outcomes related to level of self-compassion, state of depressive symptoms, and improved satisfaction regarding access to local community health services. Lastly, the program was evaluated to ensure feasibility for sustainability. Overall, as a result of the intervention activities there was statistical significance showing that most of the participants improved their feelings of adequacy, understanding, patience, managing hard time, and being less judgmental of their own inadequacies. Collectively, utilizing this intervention reduced the risk factors for depression which in turn improved outcomes in the community dwelling elderly population.

Keywords: depression, self-compassion, elderly, community services access