Washington State Department of Health

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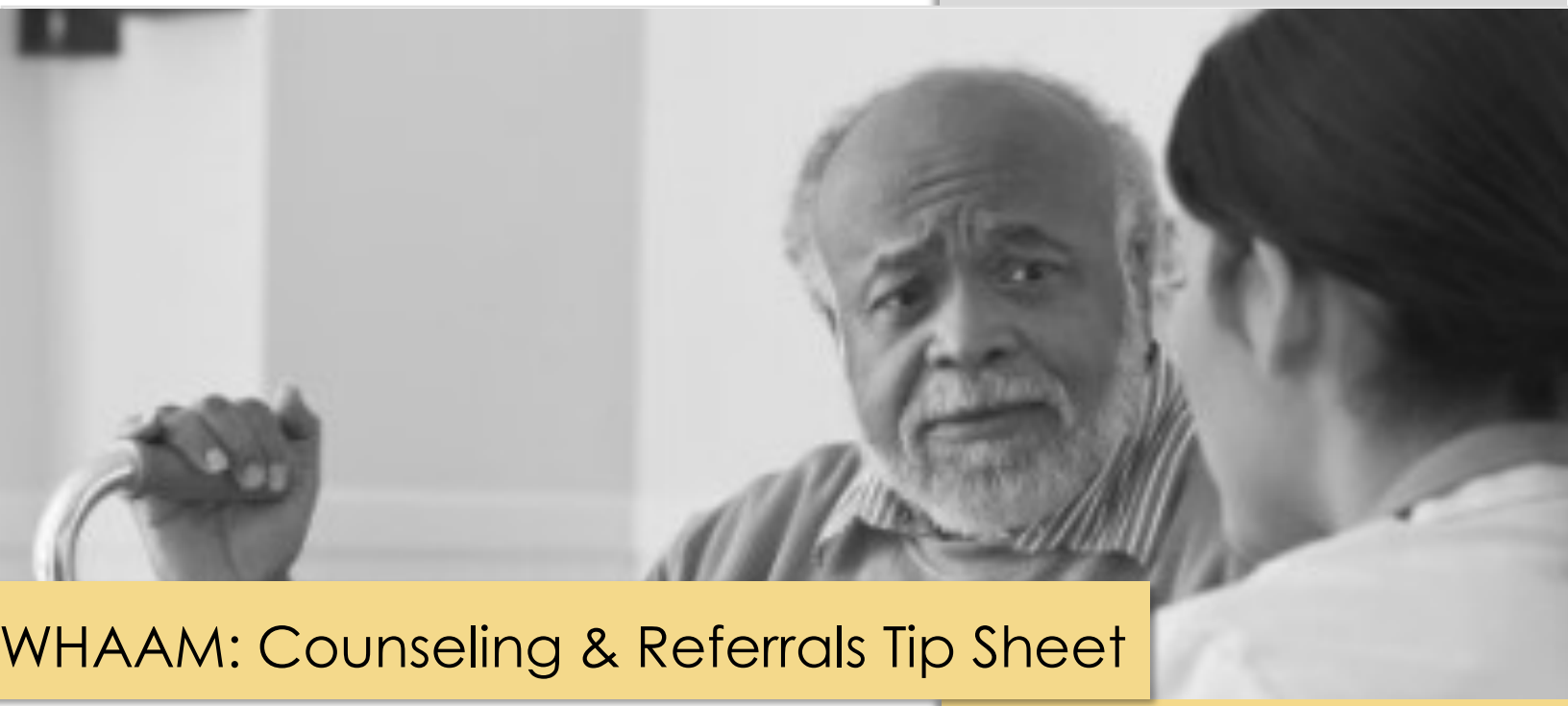

WHAAM: Counseling & Referrals Tip Sheet

Health Care Providers Are Key

Participating in joint friendly physical activity can improve arthritis pain, function, mood, and quality of life. Being physically active can also delay the onset of arthritis-related disability and help people with arthritis manage other chronic conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

Health care providers are key to educating patients about arthritis and physical activity, but it can be difficult to fit counseling on physical activity into office visits. Counseling can take many forms, a conversation between a doctor and patient, or a nurse or physician's assistant encouraging patients to review a handout. You can help your patients feel better by encouraging appropriate and safe physical activity.

September 2020

Join us!

Washington Healthy and Active for Arthritis Management (WHAAM) offers resources to assist providers in counseling patients with arthritis to decrease pain through physical activity. WHAAM provides technical assistance, printed or electronic handouts, access to national experts, and resources to help adopt counseling practices.

To participate, WHAAM and your health care organization will work together to get your team started using resources for your patients. To track the reach of the program, we ask that you share the overall number of patients served, the number of patients with arthritis, estimated or actual number of providers that give counseling, and any systemic changes that result from the project.

Counsel patients on managing pain with physical activity

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommends health care providers talk to patients with joint pain about using physical activity to safely help manage pain due to osteoarthritis.

⇒ Regular physical activity can help relieve pain due to osteoarthritis.

⇒ Walking, biking, swimming and other water activities (e.g., water aerobics, aqua jogging) are all effective ways to ease arthritis pain and are safe for most adults.

⇒ Stretching and warming up before physical activity, and cooling down and stretching at the end, are especially important for people with arthritis.

Training resource: Osteoarthritis Action Alliance: Osteoarthritis Prevention & Management in Primary Care

Time short? Get resources for patient education

⇒ Provide Exercise is Medicine Rx for Health osteoarthritis handout, and encourage patients to look through the materials.

⇒ Integrate educational information into patient educational system.

⇒ See Arthritis Foundation's Exercise and Arthritis Fact Sheet.

⇒ Provide the link for the YEStool from the Arthritis Foundation to help patients find the best physical activity for them: www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/physical-activity/getting-started/your-exercise-solution.

Consider referring patients to community programs

CDC recommends arthritis-appropriate evidence-based interventions.

⇒ Refer patients with chronic pain to evidence-based programs shown to decrease pain and increase mobility, such as EnhanceFitness.

⇒ Refer patients with chronic pain to Chronic Disease Self Management Education or Pain Self-Management Programs.

⇒ Refer patients to the Self-Directed Walk With Ease program, which has been proven effective in increasing balance, reducing pain, improving mental health, flexibility and overall physical health.

⇒ Prescribe physical activity to patients with chronic pain using ParkRx, an interactive parks search tool.

Not sure what's offered in your community?

⇒ Refer seniors to Community Living Connections using the Provider Referral Tool. Community Living Connections will contact your patient and discuss community resources.

⇒ Check out the extensive database of community resources at WA211.org or by calling 2-1-1.

Contact WHAAM staff at Arthritis@doh.wa.gov or by calling 360-515-6365.