

The Legacy of CRIS Healthy Aging: A Literature Review

Kaitlyn Goodrum, Paige Hennessy, Lindsey Burnett, and Jessica Tillman

Lakeview College of Nursing

N442: Population and Global Health

Pam Armstrong

October 3, 2024

The chosen organization for this legacy project is one that has never been focused on in the past. CRIS Healthy Aging is the community organization on which this group decided to do the legacy project. This organization is located locally right here in Danville, Illinois, at 309 N. Franklin St. The entire group participated in eight hours of service on September 24, 2024, from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm. During the hours of service, we met with several different departments throughout CRIS Healthy Aging. Our group assisted with their in-house food service for breakfast and lunch and the meal deliveries. Our group assisted with taking surveys and chatted with those who came to the organization for games and meals.

CRIS Healthy Aging was chosen for this project because no other classes have focused on this organization in the past, and it is such a great community resource that we wanted to highlight all of the services it offers the community. This organization provides many more services than any of us anticipated. Once our nursing careers begin, we can use CRIS Healthy Aging as a resource for our patients. The following articles will focus on the services CRIS Healthy Aging provides to the community. The critical role CRIS Healthy Aging plays in offering nutritional meals to the older adult population throughout Vermilion County allows those individuals to maintain their nutrition at a low cost. The socialization factor that CRIS Healthy Aging provides to the population attending their in-house services is invaluable in preventing cognitive decline and depression. I spoke with a man in his eighties; he could not say enough positive things about this organization and how it provides him with the socialization he desires since he is a widower.

Paige Hennessy

The elderly population requires further assistance in their daily living and is often considered vulnerable. Their vulnerability is due to their need for access to healthcare, support,

resources, and health concerns. The elderly have lower incomes, social isolation, chronic health conditions, and immobility (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024). Without proper access to healthcare, affordable housing, and healthy foods, this results in 1 in 10 living in poverty (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024). Lower-income can be a barrier because it results in a lack of access to healthcare. The elderly population often has more specific health needs; without proper financial coverage, this will delay care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024). Social isolation is a significant concern in the elderly population. Isolation has been shown to affect the quality of life. Health concerns, including depression and dementia, have been proven to have a lower risk in individuals with successful social solid connections. Due to these complications, 1 in every 4 older adults experiences social isolation, negatively impacting their health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024). Older adults face many barriers in their daily lives, and having resources and community help can make a difference in their quality of life.

The community may assist the elderly by signing up for assistance and providing affordable food, equipment, socialization, and access to resources. Assistance and resources may include insurance, meal plans, and home services. A study determined that when older adults have access to resources in their community, it reduces their loneliness and depression, increases social support, and increases access to healthcare (Noh et al., 2021). Older adults are then presented with a better and adequate quality of life.

Lindsey Burnett

It is essential to provide resources and facilities that offer nutritious meals for populations in need who may have a low or fixed income and may need assistance to get food. Food insecurity has become a significant public health concern, leading to issues such as diabetes and

increased healthcare costs. Obesity, diabetes, and heart conditions are prevalent in those who go to U.S. food pantries. Food is Medicine has interventions including medically tailored meals (therapeutic meals), medically tailored groceries (food pharmacies or healthy food prescriptions), and produce prescriptions (Downer et al., 2020). These programs are primarily provided by clinics through the healthcare system, provided at little to no cost to the patient, and are funded by healthcare, government, or philanthropy (Downer et al., 2020). The studies have shown through the medically tailored meals, groceries, and produce prescriptions that there has been a decrease in medical conditions such as a decrease in HbA1c in people with diabetes, resulting in a lower cost of care, decrease in inpatient hospital admissions, and an increase in diet quality and adherence to medication regimens as well as an increase of fruit and vegetable consumption (Downer et al., 2020). As the issue of food insecurity continues to increase around the world, many healthcare systems are focusing on adopting programs like Food is Medicine, where people can get meals that are customized to them in return for helping them with their health and helping them adhere to their medication regimen overall. Communities everywhere need to look at the food resources they have available in order to assist others and ensure that everyone is provided and has access to nutrient-filled food.

Food is a necessity to get the proper nutrition bodies need, but for some people, good nutrition and affordable food are hard to obtain for some people. Food banks have been crucial in food insecurity in countries for over four decades (Esmaeilidouki et al., 2023). Around the world food insecurity is a growing problem, with food shortages affecting more than one billion people (Esmaeilidouki et al., 2023). With the impact of COVID-19, food banks were hit hard by shortages of volunteers due to social distancing and lack of food due to excessive layoffs and insufficient resources to get the food into the food banks. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown

the vulnerability of modern agricultural and food markets and how food banks are a primary unit for providing food and nutrition to the marginalized and vulnerable population that is needed to maintain a robust and adaptable food supply during critical situations such as the pandemic (Esmailidouki et al., 2023). As a result of the global pandemic, it is predicted that more than 140 million people will be living in extreme poverty by the year 2020; this is a 20% increase from the previous year, and food insecurity has increased dramatically (Esmailidouki et al., 2023). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is expected to increase food insecurity, malnutrition, and obesity, potentially increasing health and social inequalities (Esmailidouki et al., 2023). Food banks play a vital role in communities by offering meals to those in need, ensuring they are fed and not starving. Due to the pandemic, many food banks have been hit hard with getting volunteers in and the supplies needed to continue to support these people in need and provide them with meals throughout the week.

Jessica Tillman

Providing a public space during the day for older adults to meet and socialize with other older adults assists in providing an increased quality of life and an increased quantity of life. Providing meals, activities, and socialization allows older adults to have their own location in the community directly geared toward their socialization, nutritional, and activity-related needs. “Active aging is composed of two vital components, a positive attitude about aging and an encouragement to participate in social, economic, cultural, and spiritual activities, and these two components are intertwined” (Younes et al., 2024, p. 6). Locations in communities that provide the aging community with a safe location to socialize and utilize mind-strengthening activities assist in the older population’s ability to maintain their cognitive functioning for an increased period of time, resulting in an increased quality of life for that individual. A mind that is utilized

and learns often continues to learn and grow rather than coming to a standstill because of non-use. Research has linked physical inactivity to environmental barriers that directly affect an older adult with consequences related to their quality of life while enhancing the risk factors that can directly affect an older adult's mental and physical health while opening a door to health decline that affects multiple body systems. Positive outcomes for older adults can be provided by simply providing a space that allows the basic needs of the population to be met directly, focusing on increasing quality of life (Younes et al., 2024).

The ability to offer a nutritional program directly focused on the needs of older adults provides a vital health promotion within the community and assists in preventing physiological decline related to nutritional deficits. The older adult population faces psychological and physiological changes that impact the older adult's ability to thrive properly. This inability to thrive leads to preexisting health issues becoming more complex and possibly chronic; avoidance of these conditions could occur with an initial nutritional program put into place. "Older adults are at greater risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease and cancer, as well as health conditions related to changes in muscle and bone mass, such as osteoporosis" (DeSilva & Anderson-Villaluz, 2021, p. 1). The older adult population is at an increased risk of being nutritionally deficient because of physical changes related to aging, reduced physical activity, forgetfulness, transportation limitations, and financial limitations affecting their ability to purchase the necessary amount of food. Locations that provide meals and a delivery service allow the elderly to obtain nutritious meals without being affected by limitations that may be out of their control. Nutritious meals provided to the community assists in promoting healthy lifestyles among the older adult population. It provides a sense of security and independence that is vital for achieving quality of life. Ensuring older adults have access to proper nutrition,

including an adequate amount of protein, proper hydration, B12 supplementation, and the ability to enjoy meals with others, provides the older adult population with the opportunity to experience health promotion through nutrition (DeSilva & Anderson-Villaluz, 2021).

References

- DeSilva, D. D., & Anderson-Villaluz, D. A. (2021, July 20). *Nutrition as we age: Healthy eating with the dietary guidelines*. Health.gov. <https://health.gov/news/202107/nutrition-we-age-healthy-eating-dietary-guidelines>
- Downer, S., Berkowitz, S. A., Harlan, T. S., Olstad, D. L., & Mozaffarian, D. (2020). Food is medicine: Actions to integrate food and nutrition into healthcare. *BMJ*, 369(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m2482>
- Esmailidouki, A., Rambe, M., Ardestani-Jaafari, A., Li, E., & Marcolin, B. (2023). Food bank operations: Review of operation research methods and challenges during COVID-19. *BMC Public Health*, 23(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16269-4>
- Noh, E., Park, Y., Cho, B., Huh, I., Lim, K., Ryu, S. I., Han, A., & Lee, S. (2021). Effectiveness of a community-based integrated service model for older adults living alone: A nonrandomized prospective study. *Geriatric Nursing*, 42(6), 1488–1496. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2021.10.006>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024, May 13). *Social determinants of health and older adults*. Health.gov. <https://health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/healthy-aging/social-determinants-health-and-older-adults>
- Younes, S. R., Marques, B., & McIntosh, J. (2024). Public spaces for older people: A review of the relationship between public space to quality of life. *Sustainability*, 16(11), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16114583>