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Monday, 22 November 2010 16:12

Peer support is powerful, especially when it comes to your health. For example, a recent study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found people with diabetes who managed their symptoms together had better outcomes than doing so on their own. And for the increasing number of people living with hypertension, diabetes, arthritis and cancer, the ***combination*** of skills development and peer support can make a difference in how they cope with their condition and the pain, anxiety and fatigue that often comes with it

Based on the work of Stanford University researcher Kate Lorig, DrPH, **Better Choices, Better Health** ™, (available at selfmanage.org) is an online workshop that teaches self-management management skills in the context of a virtual group. Rigorous studies have demonstrated that this program helps individuals decrease their fatigue, exercise more, expand their self-confidence and improve their health.

The National Council on Aging is currently piloting Better Choices, Better Health in Iowa. While the program is valued at approximately $200 per person, it is now provided free of charge to participants, thanks to pilot funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Better Choices, Better Health: How It Works

Throughout the six-week workshop, individuals interact with peers and trained facilitators – many of whom have a chronic condition themselves. They come together and set their own goals and build action plans to achieve them. Participants discuss ways to reduce stress, find and use community resources, and learn better ways to talk to their doctor and families about their health.

Available Online and In the Community

Better Choices, Better Health is the online version of Stanford University's internationally recognized Chronic Disease Self Management Program (CDSMP), which takes place in-person in community-based settings.

Iowa also offers the community-based program, called **Iowa Healthy Links** available at www.iowahealthylinks.org or (617) 624-5440, which is provided through the state Department of Public Health. Both Iowa Healthy Links and Better Choices, Better Health programs are effective in addressing a wide range of chronic health conditions.

You can view a video of the community-based version of the program here: http://www.ncoa.org/improving-health/chronic-disease/healthier-lives.html

I'd like to put you in touch with Jay Greenberg, SVP of Social Enterprise at NCOA, Kate Lorig, founder of CDSMP and director of the Stanford Patient Education Research Center, or a program instructor or participant to further discuss how Better Choices, Better Health and Iowa Healthy Links are impacting the local community.