

What were the goals of the project?

In April 2015, the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD), with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), funded selected state and territorial health departments to implement priority action items from ***The Healthy Brain Initiative: The Public Health Road Map for State and National Partnerships, 2013 - 2018*** (a.k.a., the Road Map)¹. Puerto Rico was among the seven states and territories awarded funded under this initiative. The Puerto Rico Department of Health worked with the Prevention Research Center at the University of South Carolina to implement the Puerto Rico Alzheimer's Plan, with a special focus on education and empowerment. The project included conducting a needs assessment on capacity building and a comprehensive evaluation of a recently initiated educational initiative that uses social media to support informal but structured conversations with experts about Alzheimer's disease, risk factors, diagnosis, pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments, management of behavioral changes, and healthy living. The results of the assessment conducted in this project will help Puerto Rico continue to identify needs related to capacity building among the workforce in Elderly Care Centers and demonstrate the impact of educational activities initiated in Puerto Rico during the past year.



What are the key accomplishments of the project?

- During this funding period, action items detailed in the Puerto Rico Alzheimer's Plan were implemented.
- A total of 11 Elderly Care Centers (day care centers for seniors) participated in the needs assessment by administering the needs assessment questionnaire to their employees. After data were analyzed, a report and action plan were developed and shared with key stakeholders.
- An educational initiative entitled, *Un café por el Alzheimer* was implemented to facilitate informal conversations and knowledge sharing about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The initiative uses in-person meetings held in coffee shops across the country and social media to achieve the initiative's goals and objectives.
- An evaluation plan was developed to assess the extent to which *Un café por el Alzheimer* and the use of social media can be used to increase Alzheimer's awareness in the general population. The evaluation itself is currently underway and the results will be used to enhance the initiative.

What additional lessons have been learned?

- When administering the needs assessment questionnaire in worksites, it is important to allow employees to participate at several different times during the day. In this project, data collection was initially scheduled to occur around mid-day and this often resulted in kitchen staff being unable to participate because they were too busy preparing the mid-day meal.
- Data collection generally takes longer than anticipated, so it is important to plan for unexpected delays. For example, a tropical storm delayed the implementation the intervention in several locations so the timeline needed to be extended.
- Collaboration with universities can be very helpful and productive. In this project, the Puerto Rico Department of Health worked with the Prevention Research Center at the University of South Carolina to implement their Alzheimer's Plan. The collaboration has been viewed positively by both organizations and additional opportunities to continue working together are being explored.

For Additional Information:

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¹ Available online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/2013-healthy-brain-initiative.pdf>

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