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By Phyllis Zorn, Staff Writer, Enid News and EagleEnidnews.com

Garfield Co. group gets grant to combat prescription drug abuse

The newly formed County Health Improvement Organization in Garfield County has been given a \$10,000 grant to fight prescription drug abuse in the county.

Allison Seigars, associate director of Rural Health Projects, Northwest Area Health Education Center, spearheaded the effort to form a CHIO for the county.

Garfield County CHIO is a subcommittee of the Health Planning Committee.

“The Garfield County CHIO builds a bridge between health care, health promotion and disease prevention so that we can better serve our community,” said Maggie Jackson, health educator for Garfield County Health Department and chair of Garfield County CHIO. “It has created greater access to information, resources and partnerships. I am looking forward to seeing the impact that this cross-discipline collaboration will have on our health.”

Public Health Institute of Oklahoma, a statewide, nonprofit agency, certifies pre-existing Turning Point Coalitions across the state as CHIOs. The vision of these organizations came from Dr. James Mold, a primary care physician and professor from the University of Oklahoma’s Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, and Arlinda Copeland, director of Oklahoma Turning Point.

Copeland and Mold developed a concept modeled on agriculture extension agencies that help farmers improve production and quality of farming operations.

Mold said primary care physicians often feel isolated and do not have the time to attend meetings to discover what other efforts are being made to improve health within the community.

CHIOs will help share information among medical providers by offering a connection to others across the state through the CHIO system.

The Garfield CHIO will work with local medical providers in implementing identified best practices for prescribing narcotics and also work to increase awareness of prescription drop-off sites and events.

“Being certified as a CHIO brings more attention and increased capacity to our community’s efforts to decrease prescription drug abuse,” said Sean Byrne, executive director of PreventionWorkz. “This is a problem that has reached epidemic proportions, and Dr. Mold should be credited with his efforts to involve health care professionals in finding solutions.”

“Translating academic research into daily clinical practice has proven very difficult,” said Andy Fosmire, executive director of Rural Health Projects. “According to the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research, it can take 10 to 20 years to get new findings translated to commonly-accepted policy and procedure; the CHIO should speed that up dramatically, in turn improving patient care and outcomes.”

The CHIOs also will connect primary care practices with other organizations working to improve health in the community, such as food ministries, area health education centers, health departments, regional prevention centers and social service organizations.

Garfield County’s CHIO has a representative from Primary Care Advisory Board to speak on behalf of the primary care physicians in the county. Also represented are Enid Community Clinic, Garfield County Health Department, Great Salt Plains Health, Health Planning Committee, Integris Bass Baptist Health Center, Oklahoma Health Care Authority, Our Daily Bread, PreventionWorkz, Rural Health Projects/Northwest Area Health Education Center, SoonerSUCCESS, St. Mary’s Regional Medical Center, Turning Point and the 71st Medical Group at Vance Air Force Base.

For more information about the Garfield CHIO, call Seigars at (580) 213-3177 or email agseigars@nwosu.edu.

The 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health ranked Oklahoma first in all age categories “for the consumption of non-medical pain relievers.”

According to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services:

- The percentage of Oklahomans 12 and over who reported using painkillers non-medically — 8.1 percent — was nearly double the national average of 4.8 percent.
- Oklahoma sells 9.2 kilograms of opioid pain relievers per 10,000 people, while the national rate is 7.1 kilograms per 10,000 people.
- Misuse or abuse of pharmaceuticals resulted in 1.2 million emergency room visits in 2009 and increase of 98.4 percent since 2004.