

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Trina Radske-Suchan, President/CEO
Iowa Community HUB
tsuchan@iacommunityhub.org

Greg Welk, Ph.D.
Iowa State University
gwelk@iastate.edu

A \$1.125 million CDC grant to benefit Iowans with arthritis

Statewide effort will increase the number of Iowans accessing arthritis programs

[Clive, November 20, 2023] – More than 58 million adults in the United States have arthritis, a leading cause of work-related disability. Many adults with arthritis have moderate or severe joint pain and approximately 44% of adults with arthritis report limitations, including trouble doing daily activities. Further, arthritis and arthritis-attributable activity limitations are most prevalent among adults with worse physical and mental health profiles and greater social disadvantage.

An interdisciplinary team of researchers from the Iowa State University (ISU) translational research network (U-TuRN) led a collaborative grant proposal to the CDC to build capacity for improving arthritis care in Iowa. The funded 5-year (\$1.125M) Cooperative Agreement award is the first state-level funding that Iowa has received to address arthritis care (see [link](#) to the CDC announcement). It was developed in direct collaboration with the Iowa Community HUB, a nonprofit organization operating as a *community care hub* to serve clinical and community partners in Iowa. Collectively, the team will build capacity to promote the broad dissemination of arthritis appropriate evidence-based interventions (AAEBIs) across the state. The active collaboration of an array of clinical and community partners will facilitate this reach across the state. Dissemination will be directly facilitated by the state network of county extension offices supported by ISU Extension and Outreach.

Iowa, as a predominantly rural state, has an overall rate of diagnosed arthritis of 25.9%, which translates to over 600,000 Iowa adults with arthritis. Rates of arthritis vary considerably by county due to disparities in access and care related to arthritis and physical activity counseling. Thus, a specific goal is to reach out to underserved, rural populations to help reduce disparities in arthritis prevention and treatment. Evidence shows that physical activity programming can reduce symptoms and enable better management of arthritis, but there are a number of barriers to receiving appropriate interventions. Thus, the project will focus on promoting access to an array of Arthritis Appropriate Evidence-Based Interventions (AAEBIs) across the state. Examples of priority AAEBIs promoted through the project are the [Walk with Ease](#) program (led by ISU), group formats of [Tai Chi for Arthritis](#) (facilitated through the University of Iowa) and the [Better Choices Better Health](#) self-management program (managed by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services). The Walk with Ease (WWE) program developed by the Arthritis Foundation is the primary intervention strategy as it is available in group, self-directed and hybrid formats to support programming across the state.

Arthritis Foundation
Walk With Ease
Your guide to walking for better health, improved fitness and less pain



Published by the experts you trust
at the Arthritis Foundation



The project will promote training and effective implementation of WWE and other AAEBIs in community-based settings across the state in collaboration with the state network of county Extension offices, Area Agencies on

Aging, and the Iowa Alliance of YMCAs. The project also complements statewide efforts of the Iowa Falls Prevention Coalition to promote awareness about fall prevention programming since frailty and arthritis are also linked to risks for falling. Over the five-year project, the team will build capacity for a sustainable, statewide system to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes in lowans with arthritis.

The major strength of the model used in the project is the integration of state agencies, clinical providers and community partners through the [Iowa Community HUB](#). The **general advantage** of a Hub model is that it centralizes and coordinates an array of administrative functions, including contracting with health care organizations, payment operations, management of referrals, fidelity and compliance functions, data security and reporting. The **specific advantage** of the Iowa Community HUB is that it provides a centralized point of reference for coordinating enrollment and delivery of AAEBIs. Providers in the state have a singular point of contact to refer patients that would benefit from AAEBIs. Participants that are referred will also be supported by trained HUB Navigators that can assist in finding options to directly support individuals based on their needs, interests and geographic location.

The project harmonizes efforts from a diverse network of partners, providers and organizations across the state. The HUB has established six different project teams including a Delivery Organization Team, a statewide AAEBI Coordination Team, a Referral Provider Team, a Connector Partners Team, a Marketing Team, and an Evaluation Team. Organizations interested in partnering on the project, receiving training to deliver AAEBIs or in facilitating referrals into programming can learn more by contacting the HUB at info@iacommunityhub.org or 515-635-1285. Individuals interested in becoming more physically active or in participating in the various AAEBIs can also contact the HUB to find out about programming options in their county or community¹. Visit the [Program Library](#) page to join a program or the [Individual and Family](#) page to access screening tools or to contact a HUB Navigator with questions.

Grant Project Partners

Aging Resources of Central Iowa
Connections Area Agencies on Aging
Hello Better Healthcare, LLC
Iowa Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Iowa Compass
Iowa HHS, Division of Aging and Disability
Iowa HHS, Division of Strategic Operations
Iowa Rural Health Association
ISU Extension & Outreach
ISU Translational Research Network (U-TuRN)
MercyOne Des Moines
Primary Health Care
UIHC Trauma Program

Arthritis Foundation – National / Iowa
Findhelp
Iowa Alliance of YMCAs
Iowa Community HUB
Iowa Falls Prevention Coalition
Iowa HHS, Division of Public Health
Iowa Primary Care Association
ISU Department of Kinesiology
ISU Indicators Program
Iowa Total Care
Milestones Area Agencies on Aging
Telligen
UnityPoint Health – Des Moines

¹ The Walk with Ease program is free for individuals participating in the self-directed program or through organizations affiliated with the HUB, but other programs may have associated costs for participation.