

“The day that I received a flyer in the mail about the Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSM) program was an eye-opening day,” said a 63-year-old woman who recently graduated from a CDSM class. “I didn’t hesitate to register. I came to class ready to learn how to become an effective manager of my health, my life. I wanted these skills.”

Fairhill Partners has been offering CDSM classes since 2007. Trained leaders, a mix of Fairhill paid staff and volunteers, deliver the six-week program at sites all over Cuyahoga County. We schedule classes both at Fairhill Partners and at community sites such as senior centers, hospitals and clinics, and senior residences.

More than half of all Ohioans, and 80% of older adults, suffer from one or more chronic conditions. Chronic disease can cause premature death, drives up health care costs, negatively affect quality of life and threaten the ability of individuals to remain productive and independent within their own homes and communities. The more chronic illnesses an individual has, the more likely that individual will become hospitalized. Three of five adults with diabetes have other serious health problems.

CDSM and its diabetes-specific counterpart, Diabetes Self-Management (DSM), developed at and licensed by Stanford University, help individuals with chronic conditions learn how to manage and improve their own health, while continuing or reducing health care costs. The programs focus on meeting challenges that are common to individuals suffering from diverse chronic conditions, such as pain management, nutrition, exercise, medication use, emotions, and communicating with family and health care providers.

People participate for many different reasons. “My sisters and I are attending this class so we have an excuse to get out, but also to learn how to manage our lives better now that we are no longer caregivers to our mother,” said one participant. “I have to take care of me now, and it’s too much without some direction.”

In one five-year research project, CDSM was evaluated in a randomized study involving more than 1,000 subjects. This study found that people who took the program, when compared to people who did not take the program, improved their healthful behaviors (exercise, cognitive symptom management, coping, and communications with physicians), improved their health status (self-reported health, fatigue, disability, social/role activities, and health distress), and decreased their days in the hospital.

The process in which the program is taught is critical to its effectiveness. Classes are highly participative, where mutual support and success build the participants’ confidence in their ability to manage their health and maintain active and fulfilling lives.

“There is so much information that I can use and share with others even after my class is over,” one participant said.

In addition to delivering these classes for older adults and their caregivers, we also work to build capacity by training and monitoring leaders for the program. The program was developed at and is licensed by Stanford University, and we are responsible for ensuring fidelity to the model.

We’d love to have you join us as a participant or a leader! Please visit our website, www.fairhillpartners.org, or call 216-421-1350 for more information and a list of classes (including leader training) scheduled throughout a four-county area.

A graduate sums it up: “It’s more to life than just being alive. It’s about living. By taking this class I have received tools to take with me throughout the remainder of my life.”