

What you can do to manage arthritis and osteoporosis? Self management programs that work.

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The experience of living with a chronic condition such as arthritis and osteoporosis may involve adapting to many changes. On a daily basis, people experience uncertainty about the severity of their symptoms, restricted movement, pain, frustration and fear. Learning to manage these complex problems is an enormous challenge.

According to Dr Kate Lorig (2000) from Stanford University Patient Education Research Centre, managing a chronic condition involves making a choice. "Either choose to do nothing and suffer or just take medication or positively self manage and take all the best treatments that health care has to offer and be proactive in your day to day management. This will lead you to a healthy life".

Choosing to take an active role or becoming a self-manager, involves learning ways to overcome the physical and emotional problems caused by the chronic condition, maintaining involvement in daily activities important to the individual and learning how to manage the illness.

The arthritis self management course and chronic disease self management course (known in Victoria as the Better Health Self Management Course) were designed by Dr K. Lorig and colleagues from the Stanford University Patient Education Resource Centre. The osteoporosis prevention and self management course was designed by Arthritis Victoria for adults with osteoporosis and for those who are concerned about minimising their risk of developing this condition. Course participants can experience benefits from trying new coping strategies and gain increased confidence in their ability to manage their condition along with an increased sense of control over their health.

Results of a number of randomised controlled trials have indicated that effective self management programs can achieve better outcomes for patients and reduce costs, compared with the usual care. (Lorig et al 1989, Lorig et al 1999, Carvalho et al 2000, Bartholomew et al 1997).

An overview of the course content will be presented. Trained leaders deliver these courses for small groups in community settings. Arthritis Victoria offers leader training for both health professionals and peer educators (people with the lived experience of chronic illness). The Better Health Self Management Course leader-training program is nationally accredited.

By involving peer educators in the program the Stanford team, recognised the role of the "expert patient" in chronic illness. Noel Smith takes this "expert patient" role as a self management course leader who has lived with arthritis and health disease for 35 years. Noel will share his unique perspective as a

someone who is both an active self manager and a self management course leader.

Self management courses are held at venues across Victoria. To find out where your nearest course is check the coming events page www.arthritisvic.org.au or phone the Arthritis Victoria Telephone Information Service (03) 8531 8000.

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