

Spirituality may help women manage chronic illness

July 8 2009

(PhysOrg.com) -- As women increasingly outlive men, they face increasing risks of chronic illness as they age.

How [women](#) draw strength from spirituality and social networks is the focus of an interdisciplinary research team from the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing and the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

Principal investigators Camille Warner and Kathryn Betts Adams are working to find out if these factors play a role in how women 65 years and older manage and cope with such chronic illnesses as arthritis, [high blood pressure](#), diabetes, cancers, heart disease and other health issues.

According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Promotion, 80 percent of older adults have one or more [chronic illness](#), and half of older people have more than one.

“Women traditionally are the healthcare managers in the family,” said Warner. “But how well they are coping and managing their own health problems is increasingly important as women live longer and many times live alone in the community.”

Adams and Warner will recruit women living with family members or on their own in community housing, without assisted living support to participate in the study. They will survey 125 women over the course of the one-year pilot study. Volunteers will be asked about spiritual areas of

their lives and also about what they do to keep active and involved with friends and others around them.

A follow-up questionnaire six months later will help track any changes in their outlooks on life and whether marshalling social help or tapping into spiritual beliefs impacts their overall sense of wellbeing. The investigators also want to know if these lines of support help women manage their chronic illnesses.

From initial data collected, Warner and Adams hope to take the next step and design an intervention to help both social and healthcare workers assist older women manage their illnesses using a variety of coping skills.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Spirituality may help women manage chronic illness (2009, July 8) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-07-spirituality-women-chronic-illness.html>

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