

Improving quality of life for diverse older adults living with dementia in New York: Toward a dementia friendly Bronx

Justine McGovern

City University of New York, USA

Abstract

With a rapidly aging diverse population, the borough of the Bronx in New York City has the worst social and health outcomes among older adults in the city, and some of the highest rates of older adults aging in place. Neighborhoods in the Bronx tend to be ill-equipped to meet a wide range of expanding needs of diverse older adults. Moreover, the number of community-based older adults living with dementia in the Bronx is not only growing, but also is considered to be vastly under-representative of reality.

A confluence of factors, including cultural differences such as language, health beliefs and beliefs about aging among diverse older residents and care providers, community-members' distrust of institutions, and a lack of services tailored to the needs of diverse older adults, contributes to poor understanding of cognitive impairment and poor outcomes for those living with dementia and their cares. Building on a UK-based model, the Dementia-Friendly Bronx Project aims to increase community awareness about dementia to reduce hardship and improve quality of life for individuals living with dementia in Bronx neighborhoods.

The project is collaboration between Lehman College, a City University of New York (CUNY) senior college located in the Bronx, and Chicago-based partners. While the model has been translated across the world and the US, few major urban centers with vastly diverse senior populations have attempted to create dementia friendly communities. Chicago has done so by focusing on a neighborhood rather than an entire city, with positive outcomes. This paper will track the evolution of the project, share results of the collaboration to date, and articulate implications for replicating the model in diverse urban environments. Significantly, the project is the first of its kind in New York City.



Biography:

Justine McGovern was awarded her doctorate of Social Work from New York University in 2012. She is an Associate Professor in the City University of New York's (CUNY) Lehman College Department of Social Work, where she is also the Interim Director of the CUNY Institute for Health Equity and Co-coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Minor in Aging. She has published and presented internationally, and has over 20 years of practice in urban social work.

Speaker Publications:

1. Brush, J., & Calkins, M. (2008). Cognitive impairment, wayfinding, and the long-term care environment. *Perspectives in Gerontology*, 13, 65–73.
2. Brush, J., Meehan, R., & Calkins, M. (2002). Using the environment to improve intake in people with dementia *Alzheimer's Care Quarterly*, 3, 330–338.
3. Burgener, S., & Berger B. (2008). Measuring perceived stigma in persons with progressive neurological disease: Alzheimer's dementia and Parkinson's disease. *Dementia*, 7, 31–53.
4. Calkins, M. P. (2009). Evidence-based long term care design. *Neurorehabilitation*, 25, 145–154.
5. Calkins, M.P. (2012). Using the environment to support dressing and continence: Results from recent research. Presentation at Leading Age PA Conference and Exposition. Hershey PA. 24 June 2012.

[10th International Conference on Geriatrics, Gerontology & Elderly Care](#); Webinar- September 23-24, 2020.

Abstract Citation:

Justine McGovern, Improving quality of life for diverse older adults living with dementia in New York: Toward a dementia friendly Bronx, *Geriatrics 2020*, 10th International Conference on Geriatrics, Gerontology & Elderly Care; Webinar- September 23-24, 2020 (<https://geriatrics-gerontology.insightconferences.com/speaker/2020/justine-mcgovern-city-university-of-new-york>)