

Learning Objectives

- Describe the value of an offsite education series
- Discuss option for funding an educational series
- Verbalize understanding of the processes used in planning and implementation of an educational series
- Describe staff and financial resources necessary to complete monthly education events

Background

This monthly educational series has been in existence since 2006. The current MS Certified RN facilitator is the third one in the 12 years of the series. Smooth transitions were accomplished by careful explanations of the program processes and by mentoring of the new facilitator by the previous one. A neuroscience social worker has been co-facilitator for the last 9-10 years. Attendees are those with MS and their support partners as well as individuals who have loved ones with MS who live out of the area. Average attendance has steadily increased and was 55 in 2017.

Program Features

Schedule

- Same time each month
- Held 9 or 10 months out of the year
- Meal at 6 PM; end by 7:30 PM
- End time allows participants time to visit, yet return home at a reasonable hour

Cost to Participants

- No cost to participants
- Events are funded by pharmaceutical companies or grants

Meal

- A free meal is provided
 - Allows attendance directly after work
- The meal is catered by the venue

Advertising

- Flyers are mailed after waiver is signed
- Gundersen Health System marketing department notifies local newspaper
- Event listings are available on the Gundersen Health System website
- Yearly calendar mailed in January

Venue

- Accessible with handicapped restrooms
- Free parking within 2 blocks
- Participants seated at round tables
- Adequate space accommodates wheelchairs, scooters and walkers

Topic Categories

1. MS disease process
2. Symptoms and management
3. Disease modifying medications
4. Quality of life issues

Quality of speakers

- MD, PA, NP, RN
- PT, OT, Music therapist
- Ethicist, neuropsychologist
- Community educators, local experts
- Persons with MS

Hosting

- Facilitator RN & SW available thru event
- Emphasis on greeting, providing assistance, answering questions

Ecumenism

- Participants live in a 60 mile radius
- Receive care in Wisconsin, Minnesota or Iowa
- Gundersen Health System MS certified RN plans and coordinates

Funding

- Pharmaceutical companies
- Gundersen Medical Foundation grant
- Mayo Clinic Health System La Crosse

Managing expenses

- Wages for RN facilitator and SW
 - 3 hours evening of the event
 - 6-8 hours planning per month
- Cost of printing
- Cost of mailing

Conclusions

- Provide educational opportunities beyond the office setting
- Provide opportunity for participants to form new friendships and gain additional support
- Education series is well designed, well received and expected to be continued indefinitely
- Model is available for replication in any location

Facilitators

- Holly Solberg, RN, BSN, MSCN
- Barb Omit, MSW
- Kathy Meunier, RN (Retired)