

**Title:** Evaluating partnerships between MU Extension and local healthcare providers; identifying potential opportunities

**Authors:** Howard A <sup>1,4</sup>, Weitzel KJ <sup>1,2</sup>, Miller K <sup>1,2</sup>, Tyryfter J <sup>1,3</sup>

**Affiliations:** <sup>1</sup> *University of Missouri Extension*, <sup>2</sup> *Department of Physical Therapy*, <sup>3</sup> *Department of Public Health*, <sup>4</sup> *Division of Biological Sciences*

**INTRO.** Medical care and treatment are an important piece of our overall health and well-being, but community-based programs can be a valuable asset to the interdisciplinary approach to healthcare. **PURPOSE.** The first aim of this study was to examine the extent of partnerships between healthcare and MU Extension programs in Missouri and secondly to determine the need for a referral process. MU Extension health-related programs reached approximately 1,900\* Missourians in 2020, yet the connection between healthcare providers is not fully understood. **METHODS.** A survey was delivered electronically to Extension faculty and various healthcare providers in the state of Missouri and included questions to assess the connections between Extension and providers as well as feedback from program completers to healthcare providers. Healthcare providers were asked about their familiarity with Extension programs. **RESULTS.** There were 50 survey respondents, including 31 health specialists and 19 Extension faculty. Almost half of healthcare providers were in family care practice. The average physician in the data set stated their familiarity of MU Extension programs was a 3.95 on a scale of 10. Results showed that 44% of healthcare respondents were aware of MU Extension programs, however only 37% had referred patients to one. Most all faculty had connected with providers but didn't have a closed feedback loop for tracking program success. **CONCLUSION.** In Missouri, there is a need and want for community-based programs and healthcare providers are open and accepting to a referral process and follow-up of program completers. By better facilitating connections with providers, MU Extension can better serve Missouri citizens and promote healthy, active lifestyles to its participants.

\*Specific programs included in this count were participants of Stay Strong Stay Healthy, Matter of Balance, Walk with Ease, Chronic Disease Self-Management, Cooking Matters, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention and Taking Care of You.