



**For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Todd Kluss  
E-mail: [tkluss@geron.org](mailto:tkluss@geron.org)  
(202) 587-2839

**Change AGENTS Will Enable Evidence-Based Improvements for Health Care Practice**

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) has been awarded a \$5 million grant from the John A. Hartford Foundation to launch and develop the Hartford Change AGENTS Initiative, a multi-year project designed to create change in the practice environment that will improve the health of older adults, their families, and communities.

For more than two decades, the Hartford Foundation has provided support to a dynamic group of researchers and clinicians in geriatric medicine, nursing, and social work. The Change AGENTS Initiative is an interdisciplinary effort that will capitalize on the collective strengths, resources, and expertise of this community of more than 1,000 grantees, scholars, and other health system leaders.

The initiative is headed by a leadership team, modeling the change in approach that is envisioned for the practice community. The team consists of the Hartford Foundation; GSA; SCP, a socially responsible communications consulting firm; and two national experts in interdisciplinary practice change, GSA Fellow Laura N. Gitlin, PhD, and former GSA President Nancy Whitelaw, PhD.

“By bringing together these top physicians, nurses, and social workers, we can harness their collective expertise to enhance the way health care is delivered in our aging society,” said Gitlin, who serves as the director of Center for Innovative Care in Aging at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. “The collaborations we will foster will have a much greater impact than single individuals and organizations could achieve on their own.”

The Change AGENTS Initiative will have two main components. First, Hartford grantees will receive support, resources, and opportunities to mobilize for action through the development of the Change AGENTS Community. Secondly, small-group, interdisciplinary Change AGENTS Networks will be developed around priority areas related to improving the health of older adults. The first two will focus on caregiving for persons with dementia and patient-centered medical homes.

The overall project is expected to engage, connect, educate, and inspire the individual Change AGENTS — through participation in conferences, webinars, a Change AGENTS website, pilot grants, and the practice and policy-focused Change AGENTS Networks — to lead changes in health care delivery that will improve the health of older adults.

“The Change AGENTS Initiative will apply scientific knowledge to real world problems in health care practice, delivery, and policy related to older adults,” said GSA Executive Director and CEO James Appleby, RPh, MPH. “This is increasingly critical as our aging population places growing quality and cost pressures on Medicare and the health care institutions that care for older people.”

GSA has had a long history of successfully managing projects funded by the Hartford Foundation. It has administered the Hartford Geriatric Social Work Initiative since 1999 and was awarded a grant in 2013 to establish the Hartford/GSA National Center on Gerontological Social Work Excellence. In 2012, GSA became home to the National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence.

“Older people are important contributors to our society, beloved family members, and our future selves. They don’t get the quality of health care needed to maintain their independence nor to minimize suffering at the end of life,” said Hartford Foundation Program Director Christopher Langston, PhD. “The John A.



Hartford Foundation believes that we can do better for older Americans and their families, while saving health care dollars. The Change AGENTS program reflects our belief that the people in whom the Foundation has invested are the brightest hope for achieving the quality of life that we want for older people.”

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The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) is the nation’s oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging. The principal mission of the Society — and its 5,400+ members — is to advance the study of aging and disseminate information among scientists, decision makers, and the general public. GSA’s structure also includes a policy institute, the National Academy on an Aging Society, and an educational branch, the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education.

The John A. Hartford Foundation is a private philanthropy working to improve the health of older Americans. After three decades of championing research and education in geriatric medicine, nursing, and social work, today the Foundation pursues opportunities to put geriatrics expertise to work in all health care settings by advancing practice change and innovation, supporting team-based care through interdisciplinary education of all health care providers, supporting policies and regulations that promote better care, and developing and disseminating new evidence-based models that deliver better, more cost-effective health care. The Foundation was established by John A. Hartford in 1929. Mr. Hartford and his brother, George L. Hartford, both former chief executives of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (the A&P grocery chain), left the bulk of their estates to the Foundation upon their deaths in the 1950s. Additional information about the Foundation and its programs is available at [www.jhartfound.org](http://www.jhartfound.org).