AGS Launches Coordinating Center for Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program to Support Improved Health Care for Older Adults

Under a $3 million grant from The John A. Hartford Foundation, the American Geriatrics Society will administer a Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program Coordinating Center to provide strategic resources for 44 HRSA awardees working on local solutions to the national geriatrics workforce shortage

- W/ $3M @JHARTFOUND grant, @AmerGeriatrics to administer GWEP coordinating center to improve #geriatrics care

New York (Jan. 20, 2016)—The John A. Hartford Foundation has awarded the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) a $3 million grant to establish a Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) Coordinating Center. As a component of the GWEP platform administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the GWEP Coordinating Center will serve as a strategic resource for 44 organizations across 29 states working on projects to increase the number of doctors, nurses, social workers, and other healthcare professionals trained to care for America’s growing older adult population.

“As the nation’s foremost interprofessional organization in expert clinical care for older adults, the AGS is the perfect fit to lead the GWEP Coordinating Center. Through this initiative, we will support HRSA’s GWEP awardees in their work to develop a healthcare workforce that improves health outcomes for older adults by integrating geriatrics into primary care and increasing access to community-based programs for patients, families, and caregivers,” noted Steven R. Counsell, MD, AGSF, AGS President. Added AGS CEO Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA: “As part of a major HRSA initiative with local roots and national reach, the GWEP Coordinating Center strategically positions the AGS to ensure that more healthcare professionals can understand, employ, and embrace foundational principles of clinical geriatrics now and in the future.”

Across this three-year initiative, the AGS will create and oversee a GWEP Coordinating Center that provides assistance to GWEP sites through national meetings, networking opportunities, mentoring, a centralized repository of resources for professional and public education, and site visit consultations with geriatrics experts. Led by an interdisciplinary trio of Principal Investigators—Jan Busby-Whitehead, MD, CMD, AGSF; Jane F. Potter, MD, AGSF; and Ellen Flaherty, PhD, APRN, AGSF—the GWEP Coordinating Center also will work with an Interprofessional Advisory Committee to promote the GWEP vision to:

- Support centers of geriatrics education that will function as epicenters for addressing unique and targeted facets of the workforce shortage;
- Leverage these education centers to train a diverse and interprofessional array of health providers who are able to assess and address older adult needs at the individual, community, and population levels;
- Maximize older adult and caregiver engagement with the healthcare system and community-based programs;
- Improve health outcomes for older adults; and
- Integrate geriatrics knowledge and skills into primary care to ensure current and future health professionals can practice in and lead a health system that has greater capacity to provide safe, high-quality care for older adults.
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Strategic guidance on the Coordinating Center activities will be provided to the Principal Investigators and the Interprofessional Advisory Committee by experts from HRSA and The John A. Hartford Foundation, as well as Lundebjerg as AGS CEO.

“We needed a platform for recognizing, respecting, and embracing the similarities and differences across all 44 GWEP sites as a reflection of cutting edge eldercare in primary care settings,” notes Terry Fulmer, PhD, RN, FAAN, President of The John A. Hartford Foundation. “That’s why colleagues from HRSA, The John A. Hartford Foundation, and the AGS have been working to assess ways that a coordinating center can support individual GWEP sites and the national collective. We’re confident this endeavor will mobilize more resources, advance collaborative care, and ensure the longevity of our shared commitment to high-quality, person-centered care for all older adults,” Dr. Fulmer added.

The GWEP combines and replaces previous HRSA geriatrics programs. The new program recognizes that dramatic shortages among all types of healthcare professionals jeopardize our country’s capacity to deliver what is needed now for the current older adult population of more than 46 million. This need will only increase in the future, when the U.S. population of individuals 65-years-old and older nearly doubles to almost 84 million by 2050.

As contributors to and collaborators in the GWEP Coordinating Center, individual GWEP awardees together with their partners are committed to addressing eldercare needs. Twenty-five schools of medicine and 10 schools of nursing are among GWEP grant recipients, along with a school of social work and two schools of allied health, a certified nurse assistant program, and five healthcare facilities. Awarded more than $35 million in 2015 alone, these entities will focus on a range of issues independently but also together through initiatives like the GWEP Coordinating Center. Collaborations with community-based partners will ensure that the GWEP will develop geriatrics-competent healthcare professionals, integrate geriatrics into primary care delivery systems, and educate and support older adults to foster engagement in their own care and decision-making, all HRSA goals that align with those of the AGS and The John A. Hartford Foundation.

About the American Geriatrics Society

Founded in 1942, the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) is a nationwide, not-for-profit society of geriatrics healthcare professionals dedicated to improving the health, independence, and quality of life of older people. Its nearly 6,000 members include geriatricians, geriatric nurses, social workers, family practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists, and internists. The Society provides leadership to healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the public by implementing and advocating for programs in patient care, research, professional and public education, and public policy. For more information, visit americangeriatrics.org.

About Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

HRSA’s vision is Healthy Communities, Healthy People and its mission is to improve health equity through access to quality services, a skilled health workforce, and innovative programs. Its geriatrics programming is found within the Bureau of Health Workforce, which has a goal to provide programs that help America build a healthcare workforce prepared and eager to improve the public health by expanding access to quality health services and working to achieve health equity. The Bureau of Health Workforce was created in May 2014, integrating HRSA workforce programs. For more information about HRSA’s geriatrics program in the Bureau of Health Workforce, visit http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/grants/geriatricsalliedhealth/index.html.

About The John A. Hartford Foundation

Founded in 1929 by John and George Hartford of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P), The John A. Hartford Foundation, based in New York City, is a private, nonpartisan philanthropy dedicated to improving the care
of older adults. As 10,000 people turn 65 every day, the largest-ever generation of older adults is living and working longer, redefining later life, and enriching our communities and society. Comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous care that keeps older adults as healthy as possible is essential to sustaining these valuable contributions. The John A. Hartford Foundation believes that its investments in aging experts and innovations can transform how care is delivered, lowering costs and dramatically improving the health of older adults. For more information, visit www.jhartfound.org.