

## FIVE TAKEAWAYS FROM THE WEBINAR

# Age-Friendly Care in the Time of COVID-19

**Age-friendly care** can address the pandemic's disproportionate effect on older adults.

In our September 3 webinar, experts in the care of older adults and representatives from two health systems discussed how they are integrating core principles from the Age-Friendly Health Systems movement into their responses to COVID-19. To access the full webinar, visit: [www.modernhealthcare.com/AgeFriendlyCareWebinar](http://www.modernhealthcare.com/AgeFriendlyCareWebinar).

## 1 Our health systems require a different approach to care for older adults, especially given COVID-19's disproportionate impact on the chronically ill.

The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, in partnership with the American Hospital Association and Catholic Health Association, have established Age-Friendly Health Systems, a movement based on the 4Ms framework for evidence-based care—What Matters: the goals and priorities of older adults; Medication: reviewing for inappropriate medications that interfere with doing what matters; Mentation: assessing and managing delirium, dementia, and depression; and Mobility: keeping older adults moving safely. Health systems that have adopted the 4Ms have found them effective improving COVID-19 care for older adults.

## 2 With social distancing, the 4Ms framework becomes even more critical.

During a virtual visit with an older adult, the clinician should start by asking how their medical team can support the patient's personal goals for a meaningful life during this time. Next, they should ask the patient to identify their medication on camera and discuss adherence and potential side effects for each bottle. Finally, they should ask the patient to demonstrate safe mobility on camera, including showing providers

their surroundings so that any potential hazards can be identified and addressed.

## 3 Providers must be cognizant of the significant impact that isolation can have on older adults.

Isolation can lead to an accelerated decline in a patient's condition, increased falls and decreased mobility, and an increase in delirium and worsening mentation. With social-distancing restrictions in place, it is critical that clinicians address potential lack of family support. This is a time for creative thinking for COVID-safe programming, such as socially distanced concerts and instructional sessions on using technology. During this difficult time, health systems need to ensure the patient experience is at the center of COVID-19 recovery efforts.

## 4 As more care shifts to virtual, it's important to tailor care to the needs and preferences of older adults.

Telehealth ensures access to care during the pandemic, but providers need to remember that not all patients have access to a computer or Internet, and some may be limited in their understanding of technology. It's crucial that providers ensure support systems exist to help patients with telemedicine visits, which could include identifying

a family caregiver or a staff member to provide assistance or raising funds to supply older adults with smart phones or tablets.

## 5 Health systems should build age-friendly care into their culture.

Clinician alignment with age-friendly care is essential, as providers of all levels are on the front lines of treating older adults. Leaders should support champions in all departments who can train their colleagues and empower their teams. By undertaking this work, leaders can ensure outcomes are improved across the board, avoid waste, and improve productivity for providers. Building the 4Ms framework into care models will prepare health systems to immediately respond with evidence-based care during the next public health crisis.

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