



# Cancer Survivors Taking Personal Action Toward Health

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) was developed by a team of researchers at Stanford University. It is a self-management education program for people with chronic health conditions. It aims to build participants' confidence in managing their health and to keep them active and engaged in their lives. In Michigan, CDSMP is known as Personal Action Toward Health, or PATH. This program has been promoted by the Arthritis Program of the Michigan Department of Community Health since 2005 and continues to operate under its leadership although it serves people with all different types of long-term health conditions.

## **PATH and Cancer Survivors**

Self-management education workshops like Personal Action Toward Health (PATH) can assist cancer survivors as they transition from acute treatment to survivorship. For some cancer survivors, this transition may be characterized by uncertainty or even anxiety. By placing the focus on self-management, PATH can help participants gain control by teaching easy ways to reduce pain, fatigue and other common challenges. The tools learned in PATH workshops can help participants in maintain independence and stay involved in valued activities - enhancing their quality of life.

Research demonstrates the positive impact of self-management courses for people with chronic conditions<sup>1</sup>. As a complement to clinical care, this program teaches participants how to exercise properly, eat healthy, use medications appropriately, solve everyday problems, and communicate effectively with family members and health care providers. The life skills learned in this course have been shown to reduce pain, depression, fear, frustration; improve mobility through exercise; increase energy; and boost confidence in participants' ability to manage their condition<sup>1</sup>.

*As a nine year survivor of cancer, I recommend attending the PATH self-management program to give yourself the best chance of living with cancer. PATH provides the tools to take control of your life, at a time when so much of one's life seems out of control.*

- Cancer Survivor and PATH Master Trainer

*As a 2+ year survivor of Ovarian Cancer and a PATH Leader, I would like to recommend this program to anyone and everyone. I strongly believe the content of this program helped me get through the hard times during chemotherapy and I believe it is an excellent program for not only people with chronic conditions or cancer, but for their care-givers as well. Actually, I think everyone over the age of 30 should take this workshop because so much of it can be applied to make everyday living healthier and happier!*

- Cancer Survivor and PATH Trainer

## **What is it?**

Personal Action Toward Health (PATH) participants attend a 2½-hour interactive workshop once a week for 6 weeks to learn symptom management, problem-solving, decision-making, and other skills for dealing with problems common to people with chronic diseases. At each meeting facilitators present information on topics of interest to people with long-term health conditions like healthy eating, physical activity, and dealing with difficult emotions. At each session participants are also encouraged to set a realistic goal for the upcoming week and develop an action plan for meeting that goal. They report on their progress at the following workshop, and solicit feedback from the group to help address challenges.

<sup>1</sup>Center for Disease Control (2011) Executive Summary of ASMP/CDSMP Meta-Analysis retrieved on January 29, 2013 from <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/docs/ASMP-executive-summary.pdf>

Workshops are held in community-based settings such as senior centers, churches, and hospitals. They are facilitated by two trained leaders, one or both of whom are non-health professionals with a chronic disease. This program is available for free or a nominal fee in many communities across the state of Michigan. Organizations offering PATH must meet Stanford University licensing requirements.

### **Who is it for?**

PATH is for adults with chronic health conditions such as arthritis, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, depression and lung disease. The program may be particularly beneficial for people who have more than one health condition or whose health problems have begun to interfere with their valued life activities. Caregivers of someone with a chronic condition are also welcome and encouraged to attend.

### **What are the benefits?**

There is strong evidence from published clinical trials that participation in CDSMP can improve physical and psychosocial outcomes and quality of life for people with chronic health conditions. Benefits include:

- More aerobic exercise
- Better cognitive symptom management
- Better communication with physician
- Improved psychological health
- More energy and less fatigue
- Reduced depression and health distress
- Fewer social role limitations
- Increased confidence in managing arthritis

### **How Do I find a PATH Class?**

For information regarding area coordinators or to find a PATH workshop please contact Karen McCloskey at [McCloskeyK@michigan.gov](mailto:McCloskeyK@michigan.gov), or 517-335-1236.

### **For More Information**

- Stanford University Patient Education Research Center  
<http://patienteducation.stanford.edu/programs/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/interventions/self\\_manage.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/interventions/self_manage.htm)
- MI Healthy Programs (Michigan Arthritis Collaborative Partnership)  
<http://www.mihealthyprograms.org>

### References

- Barlow JH, Wright CC, Turner AP, et al. A 12 month follow-up study of self-management training for people with chronic disease: are changes maintained over time? *British Journal of Health Psychology*. 2005; 10:589–599.
- Kennedy A, Reeves D, Power P, et al. The effectiveness and cost effectiveness of a national lay-led self-care support programme for patients with long-term conditions: a pragmatic randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 2007; 61(3): 254–261. Free full text article available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2652924/pdf/254.pdf>.
- Lorig KR, Ritter P, Stewart AL, et al. Chronic Disease Self-Management Program: 2-year health status and health care utilization outcomes. *Medical Care*. 2001; 39 (11): 1217–1223.

<sup>1</sup>Center for Disease Control (2011) Executive Summary of ASMP/CDSMP Meta-Analysis retrieved on January 29, 2013 from <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/docs/ASMP-executive-summary.pdf>