

# HEALTH & WELLNESS AT GAC

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We are pleased to present a timely article by Dr. Kelly Victory, a residency trained, board certified trauma and emergency specialist with over thirteen years of clinical experience. Dr. Victory served as the Chief Medical Officer for Whole Health Management for more than five years before leading their new Health and Wellness Division. During that time she led the medical team of over 800 health professionals in the delivery of on-site health and wellness services. Dr. Victory holds a BS degree from Duke University, did post graduate study in literature at Oxford University, England, has a MS in Clinical Psychology from the University of Illinois, and received her Medical Degree from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She is trustee of the Town Hall Speakers Bureau of Cleveland, a trustee of Lake Erie College, a board member of the Golden Age Centers and Edootroniz, a medical device company. She serves on the Leadership Council for the Harvard School of Public Health.

**H**ealthcare professionals now understand that “health” is not just about eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise. To achieve true “wellness”, the full spectrum of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual components must be addressed in order to achieve an overall quality of life. The concept of “good health” requires us to focus not only on decreasing pathology, but on increasing positive attitudes such as self-efficacy, mood, an expanding sense of control, and life satisfaction. When addressing the senior population, social connectivity, mental acuity, and spiritual grounding are as important to achieving health and wellness as are ideal body weight and controlled blood pressure.

Wellness and Health goals can be easily tailored to meet the abilities of a broad range of elders. The focus extends beyond the immediate physical and medical needs to include the totality of the person and the importance of keeping seniors engaged in their own lives.

By implementing and supporting a number of simple health and wellness goals GAC programs can help improve life satisfaction, overall mood and sense of well-being in the population it serves

It comes as no surprise that a recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association indicates that adults over the age of 60 who had high levels of fitness are living longer. We know that a sedentary lifestyle, due to age, depression, obesity, arthritis, stroke or respiratory diseases, is a major risk factor for disability in older adults. Research supports the importance of physical activity in reducing the risk of these debilitating conditions.

The benefits of physical activity have been well documented and include: increased appetite, increased mobility and flexibility, and improved muscle strength and aerobic capacity. As a result, more active participants have better dietary intakes, improved functional capacity to perform *Activities of Daily Living*, reduced risk for falls, improved bone health, and improved responses to coronary heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and osteoarthritis. Ultimately, these programs improve functionality and promote independence.

One of Golden Age Centers’ goals is to keep people in their own homes, or at least in the least restrictive environment possible. For individuals assessed as “at-risk,” isolation from family, friends and resources remains a barrier to physically activity, healthy nutrition and social connectivity. These individuals are no longer independent enough to participate in

organized activities and need care at home even for the most basic living activities. They often face multiple acute and chronic conditions in a fragmented, complex health care system.

While the current healthcare debate is focused on cutting costs, we believe a pro-active approach will help to control costs by focusing on wellness, self-care and overall improved health. Once this is achieved there will be decreased visits to emergency departments, decreased hospitalizations, delay in the progression of debilitating diseases, and enhancement in the ability of seniors to live independently. It is GAC’s intention to continue to help make a significant impact but on quality of life for seniors we serve as we improve their sense of well-being and functional capabilities.

*“GAC programs can help improve life satisfaction, overall mood, and a sense of well-being in the population”*