

Pain Management and Chronic Disease Self-Management Programs Win James A Vohs Awards

Kaiser Permanente Northwest (KPNW) has been named the single-region winner of the 2002 James A Vohs Award for Quality for its Pain Management Program, while the first multiple-region award has been given to the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program initiated by KP Northern California and implemented in the Southern California, Ohio, Colorado, Hawaii and Georgia Regions.

The Vohs Award is an annual programwide award recognizing exceptional local efforts to address challenging quality-of-care and service issues. Its goal is to highlight multidisciplinary improvements that are measurable and transferable to other areas within KP.

The winner of the single-region award, KPNW's Pain Management Program, is an integrated, regionwide program of consultation, group visits, specialty care, and education to improve the quality of care for members in chronic pain.

"The Pain Management Program recognizes that no single therapy is effective for more than half of patients with chronic pain or all the time for any individual patient," said Al Weiland, MD, President and Regional Medical Director, Northwest Permanente PC. "Our program relies on many different treatment approaches and the skills of physicians, nurses, social workers, pharmacists, physical therapists, and health educators."

"The Pain Management Program is demonstrating a change in the way primary care is delivered," added Marilee Donovan, RN, PhD, Manager/Clinical Nurse Specialist, Pain Management Clinic, Northwest Region. "Pain is now being diagnosed earlier, and patients are experiencing reduced suffering and enhanced quality of life."

As the winner of the Vohs Award in the multiple-region category, the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program represents an innovative, multidisciplinary effort that significantly improves quality and cost outcomes for patients with mixed chronic diseases through participation in a seven-week lay-led course.

"What is unique about the project is that it focuses on mixed chronic illnesses, not just one illness, and that it primarily involves lay leaders helping patients learn to live with their conditions and cope day-to-day," explained David Sobel, MD, Director, Patient Education and Health Promotion, Northern California Region. "The program takes advantage of the knowledge our members share with one another."

The processes, tools, and techniques of the program have been successfully implemented in a standardized, sustainable way in multiple sites and regions. The process of program dissemination itself was evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively as part of the award decision process.

"I believe this is a challenge to our organization—not just to be innovative in developing programs but to be innovative in the way we disseminate and grow and learn from each other on an ongoing basis," added Dr Sobel. "Our pride in Kaiser Permanente should transcend our local areas so that we can learn from one another."

The James A Vohs Award for Quality is named for James A Vohs, who served as president, chief executive officer, and chairman of the Boards of Directors of Kaiser Foundation Health Plan & Hospitals between 1980 and 1991. In 1983, Vohs created the boards' Committee on Quality of Care to firmly establish the strategic importance of quality for the program. The Kaiser Foundation Health Plan & Hospitals' Boards of Directors established the award upon his retirement after a 40-year career with KP. ♦

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