

Welcome to

Session 14:

Connecting People and Parks



Park Prescriptions

Linking the Park and Health Sectors



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The Institute at the Golden Gate is a program of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, a nonprofit partner of the National Park Service. Our mission is to contribute to a more sustainable and healthy world by harnessing the power of parks and public lands to advance environmental stewardship and human wellbeing.



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Park Prescriptions Defined

- Programs designed in collaboration with health, parks, and community partners that use parks, trails, and open space to:
 - Improve individual and community health
 - Create new stewards and advocates for parks and public lands



Nature & Health Research Expanding

- **Physical Health Benefits**
 - Added benefits to “green exercise” (*Bowler, 2010; Thompson, 2011*)
 - Obesity (*Wolch, 2011*)
 - Vitamin D (*Kuo, 2010; Misra, 2008*)
 - Myopia (*Rose, 2008; Morgan, 2012*)
 - Healing time (*Ulrich, 1984*), Longevity (*Takano, 2002*)
- **Mental Health Benefits**
 - Stress, Anxiety, Depression (*Sugiyama, 2008; Maas, 2009; Ulrich, 1991*)
 - Reduced aggression, anger, fatigue, sadness (*Bowler, 2010; Kuo, 2001*)
 - Improved ADHD symptoms (*Taylor, 2009; Kuo 2004*)
 - Pediatric developmental milestones (*Strife, 2009*)
 - Improved cognition for elderly (*Ottosson, 2005*)
- **Community Benefits**
 - Social isolation (*Kweon, 1998*)
 - Sense of place (*Davis, 2011*)

Health Care Needs Park Partnerships



- Clinicians are on the frontline of the current epidemic of chronic diseases: physical inactivity, mental health, and social isolation
- Socioeconomic disparities in health parallel disparities in access to parks *(Floyd, 2009; Dahmann 2010)*
- Parks play an essential role in public health, as they are the most readily available, or sometimes the only, source of nature *(Bedimo-Rung, 2005)*

Parks Need Health Care Partnerships

- Per capita visits to state and national parks in the United States have decreased each year since 1987 *(Pergams, 2008)*
- Direct nature experiences lead to emotional attachment to natural settings
- “Wild nature activity” before age 11 is the most direct route to environmental stewardship as an adult *(Davis, 2011)*



United States Park Rx Initiative

- Formed in 2012 to strengthen the connection between health care and parks and public lands to improve the physical and mental health among individuals and communities.
- The Initiative involves a collaboration of national partners and subject-matter experts to:
 - Advance the movement and create awareness among various audiences
 - Address the operational hurdles present in parks and health collaborations
 - Hone and measure the best delivery models currently in practice



Park Approach: Challenges

- Several years of meetings, weaving the work into job descriptions
- Breaking down the barriers between a variety of park agencies
- The concept of consistent and introductory programming
- Staffing and resources
- Diversity of the community not always reflected in parks staff
- Relationship building: finding health partners
- Evaluation and measurement



Clinic Approach: Challenges



- Creating clinical guidelines
- Implementation challenges
 - Funding, staff
 - Dependent on a champion
 - Clinic visit is busy, hierarchy of needs
 - Providers have not visited parks and have limited knowledge of available outdoor activity
- What happens after the clinic visit
 - Doesn't deal with barriers to outdoor time
 - Follow up, tracking park visits

Conclusions and Implications

- Health care/Parks partnerships succeed with community input
- Current research gaps include:
 - In the clinic: tracking health outcomes including mental health and population based health
 - In the parks: tracking visits and making visits active
 - Community engagement
- United States Park Prescriptions Initiative is a platform for researchers to help create a national model



Thank you!

For more information visit: instituteatgoldengate.org
or contact Kristin Wheeler, kwheeler@parksconservancy.org

