

Addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness through Pharmacies Project

Funded by the Healthy Aging Initiative | Michigan Health Endowment Fund

About iMPROve Health

iMPROve Health is a recognized leader in healthcare quality improvement, with wide-ranging experience in independent medical review, utilization review, Medicare and Medicaid programs, research methodologies, data analysis, and outreach strategies. For 40 years, we have demonstrated a commitment to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare by creating innovative solutions for a diverse range of healthcare challenges.

Project Background

Project Background: Why Screen for Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Community Pharmacy Setting?

- History of working with community pharmacies on immunization-related project
- Most older adults in rural settings see their pharmacist more often than their primary care physician
- Focus on the prevention of Social Isolation and Loneliness (SIL) in the community

Project Background: Impact Statement

“Through our Social Isolation and Loneliness Reduction Project, iMPROve Health will use pharmacists to connect older adults who are at risk or socially isolated and/or lonely to essential community resources through a pilot project. We will bring together a council of multidisciplinary partners who will help guide the pilot and develop creative solutions to achieve long-term support for seniors and enhance the healthy aging process.”

Project Background: Michigan Health Endowment Fund – Healthy Aging Grant

Planning Grant: 2019 – 2021

- Formed Planning and Advisory Council
- Three pharmacies
- One Senior Service Provider
- Included funding for a Social Isolation and Loneliness Summit

Implementation Grant: 2021 – 2023

- Planning and Advisory Council continues
- Expanded to 13 pharmacies
- Five senior service providers
- Funding for a second Social Isolation and Loneliness Summit

Project Background: Project Partners/Planning and Advisory Council

- **Community Based Organizations:** Area Agency on Aging 1B, United Way of St. Clair County
- **Healthcare Organizations:** Alliance Health, McLaren ACO, Sparrow Medical Group-Portland
- **Health Information Exchange Organization:** Michigan Health Information Network
- **Healthcare Quality Improvement Organization:** iMPROve Health
- **Pharmacies:** 13 recruited, eight engaged
- **Professional Associations:** Michigan Pharmacy Association, St. Clair County Pharmacy Association, Wayne County Pharmacy Association
- **Senior Services Agencies:** Hannan Center, Ionia County Council on Aging, Macomb County Senior Services, St. Clair County Council on Aging, Senior Alliance

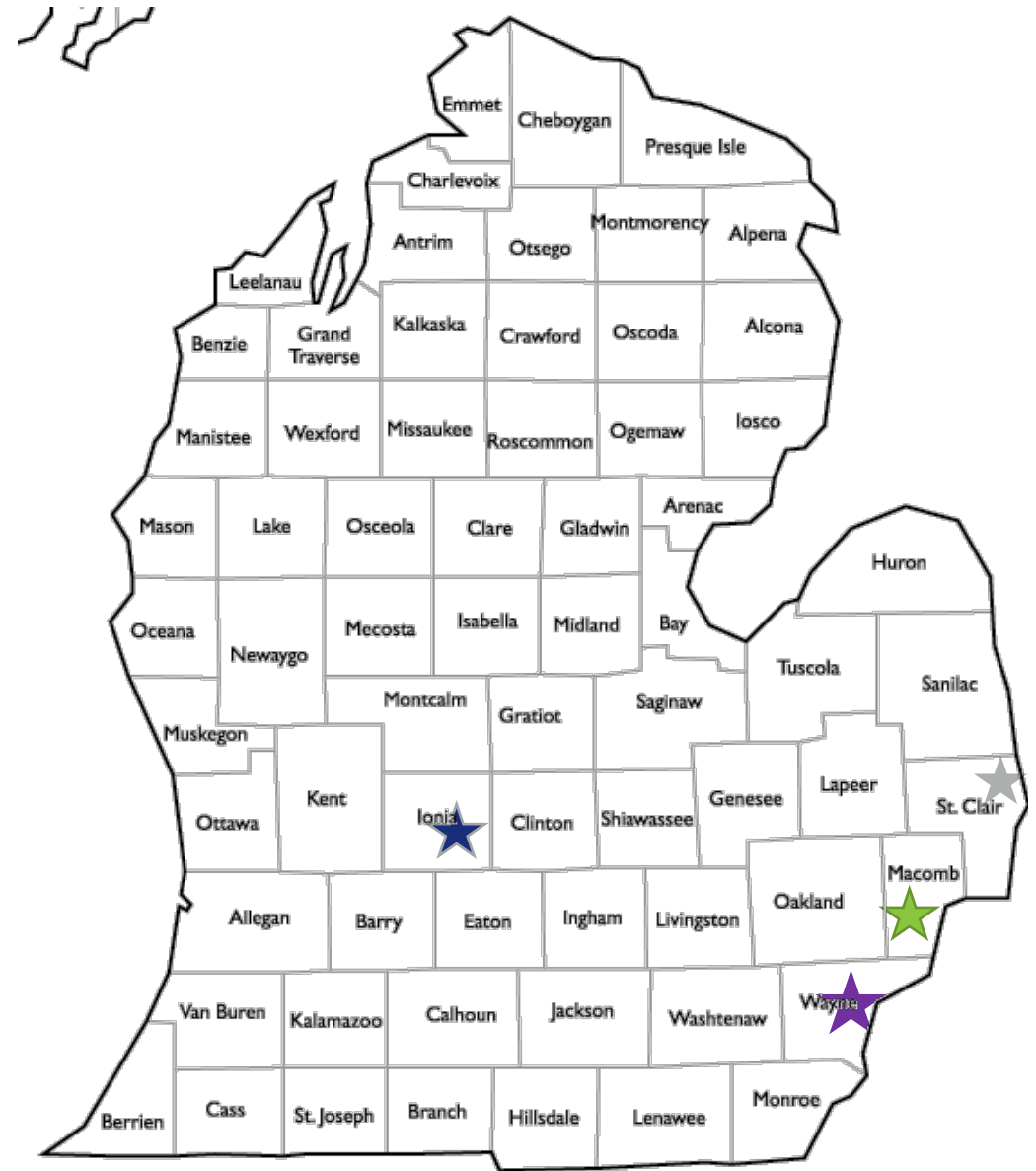
Pharmacy Partners

Ionia County: Tom's Pharmacy

Macomb County: Collie Drugs,
Sussex Pharmacy, Utica Pharmacy

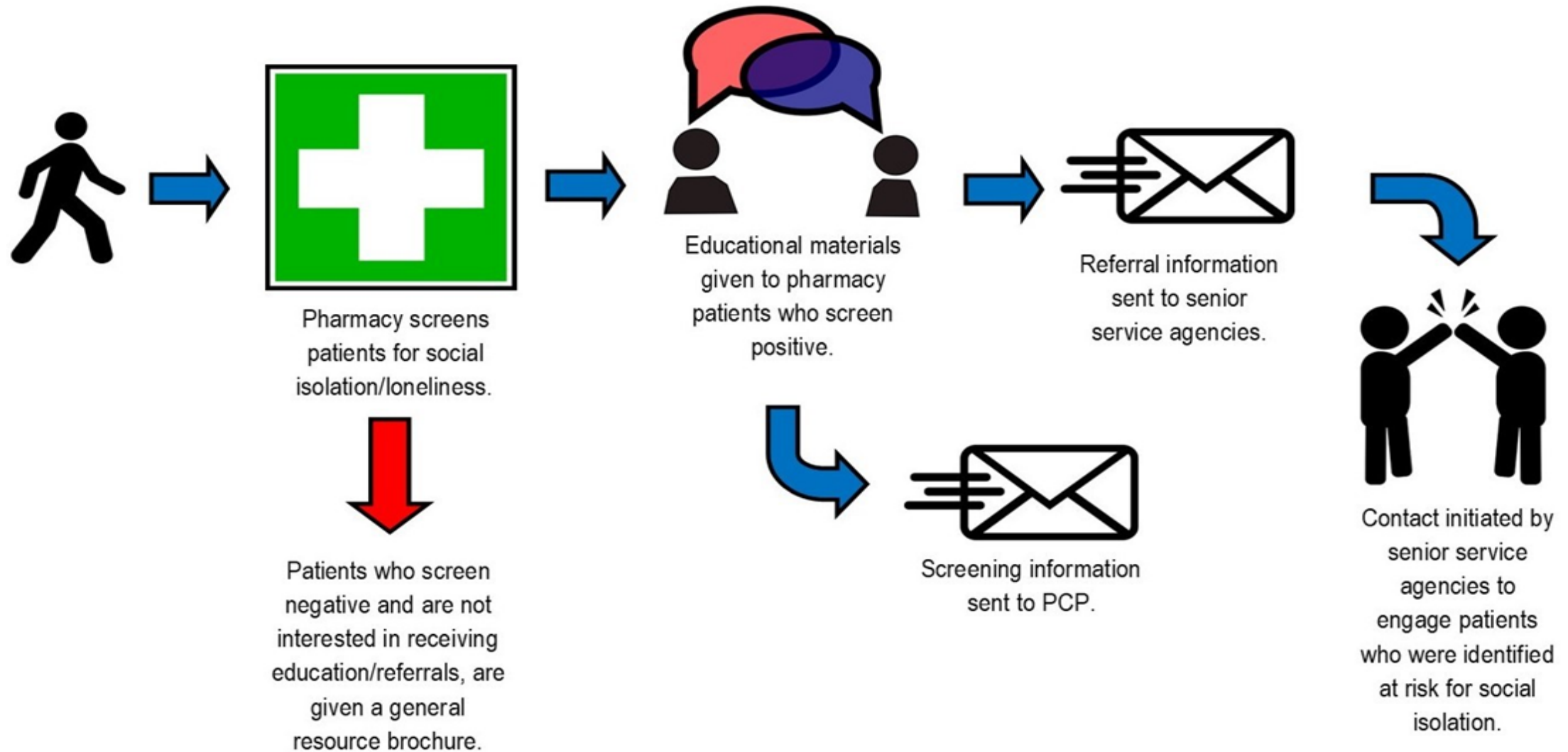
St. Clair County: Hamzavi Pharmacy,
Memphis Drugs

Wayne County: Buena Salud
Pharmacy, My Pharmacy, Rosa Parks
Pharmacy, Rosedale Community
Pharmacy, Sam's Pharmacy, University
Pharmacy, Westland Maple Drugs,
Westside Pharmacy



Project Framework

Social Isolation/Loneliness Screening and Referral Process



Project Updates: Screening Outcomes Continued

From high
decline rate to
implementing
new strategies

- Started site visits to provide consultation and increase acceptance of screening
- Developed process to provide project brochures to patients through the pharmacy's home delivery service
- Community outreach/promotion
- Asked PAC for other ideas to increase acceptance of screening

Updated Home Delivery Brochure

Do you sometimes feel **LONELY?**

We all feel lonely at times regardless of age, background, and life experiences. Everyone experiences loneliness for various reasons. There is no one way to effectively deal with loneliness, but there are many different things that can help.

HERE TO *Help*

Contact the Hannan Center at **(313) 833-1300 ext. 32**. You will be asked to provide the name of the pharmacy that referred you. If you would like more information before reaching out to the center talk to your pharmacist or visit the Hannan Center's website, **www.hannan.org**.



iMPROve HEALTH AND THE MICHIGAN HEALTH ENDOWMENT FUND

This program is brought to you by iMPROve Health. For more than 39 years, iMPROve Health has demonstrated a commitment to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare by creating innovative solutions for healthcare challenges based on research, data analysis, and collaboration. You can find more information on the Michigan Health Endowment Fund at www.mihealthfund.com and iMPROve Health at www.improve.health.



Are you keeping your feelings of
LONELINESS
to yourself?

ABOUT SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

Social isolation and loneliness are serious public health concerns affecting many older adults. They can wreak havoc on an individual's physical and mental health putting them at risk for dementia, premature death, or other serious medical conditions. Older adults are at an increased risk because they are more likely to face factors such as living alone, the loss of family or friends, chronic illness, and hearing loss.

Loneliness is the pain we feel when we are lacking connection and our social needs are not met. Social isolation is the state of having fewer social contacts, which may contribute to loneliness.



Having the support we need is a fundamental part of our well-being, and when loneliness becomes entrenched in our lives it can be hard to overcome. Is it time for you to take the next step for a more meaningful tomorrow?



YOUR PHARMACY AND YOU

Your pharmacy and iMPROve Health, a recognized leader in healthcare quality improvement, have joined forces to help individuals that feel lonely. With the support of various senior service providers, they can offer programs and services such as transportation, nutrition, health, and fitness.

These services are *free*, and the connections made while utilizing them could be the start of new friendships, hobbies, and an outlook to a happier life. Reaching out is easy, and there is no pressure to enroll in any of the programs or services.



Project Accomplishments

Project Accomplishments: Screening

- Goal for patients screened by June 2024: 420
 - 13 pharmacies, 32 screenings per pharmacy
- Total patients screened by the end of the project: 342
 - Eight pharmacies, 43 screenings per pharmacy

Project Accomplishments: Outcomes

- Brochures distributed: 1,173
- Increased screenings by 220%
 - Pre-brochure: 107
 - Post-brochure: 342

Project Accomplishments: Outcomes

- Referrals made to senior service providers: 34
- Typical referrals: Care management, Meals on Wheels, senior centers, warm-line center

Project Accomplishments: Online Learning and Project Replication Toolkit

- This web-based interactive e-learning [change package](#) assists pharmacists and other healthcare professionals in screening older adults for social isolation and loneliness, provides materials on replicating the project within their setting, and contains information on connecting people with community and healthcare resources.

SIL Summit 2023

Intergenerational Approach to Social Isolation and Loneliness

- Thursday, October 26th, 2023
- VistaTech Center at Schoolcraft College
- In-person and virtual attendance options
- Three Speakers and Two Panels
- 172 attendees



SIL Summit Feedback

- Many Summit participants stated they did not know of the programs and services offered by the panelists. Now, they want to refer their clients and patients to these programs and assess how they can replicate or offer them in their community.
- "The conference has provided a very piercing and powerful awareness of social isolation and its effects on health. While I already had some knowledge, I certainly was not aware of the extensive adverse effects across multiple populations."



SIL Evaluation Results

- ☐ Over 95% of participants rated the overall quality of the conference as “Very good/Excellent.”
- ☐ 98% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the information shared was useful to their work.



Policy Implications

Project Policy Implications

- Based on the estimated costs to Medicare due to objective social isolation, one might extrapolate potential savings from reducing objective social isolation. (1)
- 342 patients were screened, bringing awareness and education to social isolation, loneliness, and associated healthcare risks.
 - Based on an estimated cost of \$1,644 annually per Medicare beneficiary due to objective social isolation, there would be a total of \$562,248 in potential savings if all 342 people sought services from their local senior service agency or pursued other means of reducing social isolation.
 - If even 50 percent of those screened realized a reduction in healthcare costs per year, there may have been a potential \$281,124 in savings.

Project Policy Implications

- For the 34 patients who were referred directly, there was a total estimated healthcare savings of \$55,896.
- Informing healthcare academies and associations of the benefits of standardizing SIL education for pharmacists and other frontline healthcare professionals through required training.
 - Improve awareness of the health and medical impacts of social isolation and loneliness across the healthcare workforce.
 - Deploying policies that provide reimbursement for SIL education, screening, and referral for patients experiencing SIL and other social determinants of health needs could help alleviate or prevent SIL for more people.

Project Policy Implications

- This project shows that there is potential for providing a reimbursement incentive to community pharmacies to screen for SIL, which could save the healthcare system and health insurance providers money and increase social connectedness for older adults earlier in their care journey.

References

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation.

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

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