

## **Round Table Discussion – “Redemptive Capacity” – “Cohesive Social Network”**

### **Overview: The Meaning of Health and Healthcare for Older Adults in Rural Oregon**

The purpose of the study was to describe the meaning of health and healthcare from the perspective of adults 75 years and older living in rural Oregon. Using qualitative descriptive methodology and a semi-structured interview process, 18 participants identified salient themes about the meaning of health and healthcare. The average age of participants was 79.9 years with a range of 75-97 years. The goal was to inform the nursing community, other healthcare providers and community stakeholders who work to eliminate health care disparities for older rural dwelling adults.

### **Noteworthy Findings**

- Participants in this study, who were living long active lives, did not subscribe to a narrative that getting old means decline, loss, and despair. Their self-perception of personal health was positive, despite reporting multiple chronic health problems.
- Although rural life presented obstacles to healthcare access, participants agreed that advantages of rural living outweighed the disadvantages. Participants normalized obstacles to healthcare (travel distance and weather) when discussed.
- Many participants, when asked about healthcare, retold a family saga about loss of a loved one to illness or injury. Yet the evidence of bouncing back from the adversity of loss was astonishing in these stories.
- Living in a rural community provided the opportunity to be a valued part of a cohesive social network where meaningful living thrived.

*Two emerging themes from the interviews were redemptive capacity and cohesive social network. The purpose of this discussion is to add depth to the description of these emerging themes.*

### **Descriptors for “Redemptive Capacity”**

- Resilience
- The ability to bounce back
- “Dynamic process in which individuals experience adversity and thereafter reintegrate and flourish despite the experience” (Hayman, Kerse, & Consedine (2017).
- Adapting to challenge is a part of being resilient and becomes more profound at very advanced ages.

## Descriptors of “Cohesive Social Network”

- Social connectivity
- Event of place (more powerful than rural neighborhood of social connectivity taken alone)
- “Thrown together of place that unites a host of human and nonhuman features in time” (Farmer, 2012).

## Questions for Discussion:

1. The essence of a cohesive social network was expressed by words and phrases of study participants and also supported in the literature. In your opinion, what is the best way to describe a cohesive social network for rural dwelling older adults?
2. Can a “cohesive social network” be harnessed into energy and action to improve health in A rural population of older adults?

*Thank you for participating, Tamara and Darcy*

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