



Op-ed Template

Taking Control of Our Health for a Better Tomorrow

By [identify a local doctor, workshop leader, Living Well program coordinator or respected community leader to sign this op-ed]

Learning that you or a loved one has a health condition that will never go away—such as diabetes or arthritis—can be scary. It can also be a positive wake-up call and an invitation to learn how to live well.

Across Oregon, and in [county], people are learning how to manage their chronic health conditions by participating in the Living Well Program, or Tomando Control de su Salud, the Spanish-language version of the program. It is delivered in a series of classes taught by trained community members, many of whom have chronic conditions themselves.

It's a proven program, developed at Stanford University and supported by [insert name of organization] in collaboration with the Oregon Health Authority/Department of Human Services. And it works. Participants have less pain, more energy and fewer hospitalizations. They are able to live the lives they want, and gain the ability and confidence to care for their condition.

This is especially significant when we consider the magnitude of chronic disease. Nationally, 80 percent of older adults have at least one chronic condition, and 50 percent have at least two. This compares to [X] in [county]. In 2005, diseases such as cancer, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes and arthritis claimed the lives of 19,219 Oregonians and resulted in \$1.4 billion in hospitalization costs.¹

Much of this could be prevented or lessened by eating well, moving more, avoiding tobacco use and getting regular health screenings, and we have to create communities that put those healthy options within reach for everyone.

In the meantime, for the many people who already have chronic diseases, and for those diseases we can't entirely prevent, it's critical that we help our residents live well with their conditions. Our county is fortunate to host Living Well workshops that teach people with chronic conditions to take the best care possible of themselves and, in many cases, lessen the impact of their symptoms or of the condition itself.

[Add something personal from a leader or a doctor. For example: I started co-leading Living Well workshops after taking one myself and seeing the improvement in my health. [Insert brief points about how your health has improved if desired]. I applaud [insert name of local licensed or

¹ <http://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/ChronicDisease/Documents/healthor.pdf>



sponsoring organization] for offering these workshops, and I strongly encourage people with chronic conditions to participate.]

Living Well helps participants learn skills to deal with issues such as fatigue, frustration, pain and isolation. Leaders teach exercises that help maintain strength and flexibility, and provide information on properly using medications, communicating with health care providers, and evaluating new treatments.

On top of the new skills they gain, participants often form relationships that last beyond the workshops, creating a support system across the community. Their entire family often benefits, too, as participants bring home new ideas for living well and integrate healthy behaviors into their routine.

It's this kind of support that makes it possible for individuals to live well, for communities to embrace health and disease prevention, and to reduce the demand on our health care system.

I hope we'll continue to invest in Living Well workshops, education and changes in our community to help everyone eat better, move more, avoid tobacco and care for their individual health conditions. Together, we can all live well.

Workshops are open to all adults, of any age, with a long-term health condition and their support people. Workshop information and other resources can be found at [www.healthoregon.org/livingwell].

[Name]

[Organization]

[Title]

[Phone]

[E-mail]