



and learn!

WITH GUEST PANELISTS:

AARP

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
CHARLOTTE



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES  
Division of Aging and  
Adult Services

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# Aging Un-Lonely

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Moderated by: Deryl Davis Fulmer, PhD, NCRGEA

# Social Isolation and Loneliness: Top public health crisis in the US

- Historical Context
- Loneliness and social isolation have risen over past four decades.
  - Reasons include, increased life expectancy, living in age of chronic diseases, technology use, financial independence, geographic distance in families, among others
- In 2015, loneliness was declared an epidemic in US by Dr. Murthy
- In 2023, loneliness and social isolation are declared public health crisis



# Definitions of Social Isolation and Loneliness

- Social Isolation
  - Quantifiable lack of relationships or infrequent social contact (objective)
- Loneliness
  - Perception of being alone (subjective)
- Social isolation is significant risk factor for loneliness, subjective feeling and desire for greater contact with social partners (Xie, et al 2020)

Xie, B., N. Charness, K. Fingerma, J. Kaye, M. T. Kim & A. Khursdid (2020). When Going Digital Becomes a Necessity: Ensuring Older Adults' Needs for Information, Services and Social Inclusion During COVID-19. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 32:4-5, 460-470. DOI:10.1080/08959420.2020.1771237

Presented by: [Megan Smith, PhD](#)



# Current Trends: Social Isolation and Loneliness

- As many as 50% of U.S. adults report feeling lonely
- 43% of adults aged 60+ report feeling lonely
- Almost 25% of older adults considered socially isolated
- Gen Z reports rates of 61%
- Factors increasing likelihood of loneliness include, living alone, mental or physical impairments, limited social support, discrimination based on age, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and gender identity, language barriers (National Institute on Aging, 2023)



# Health Impacts

High Blood Pressure

Heart Disease

Obesity

Weakened Immune System

Anxiety

Depression

Cognitive Decline

Alzheimer's

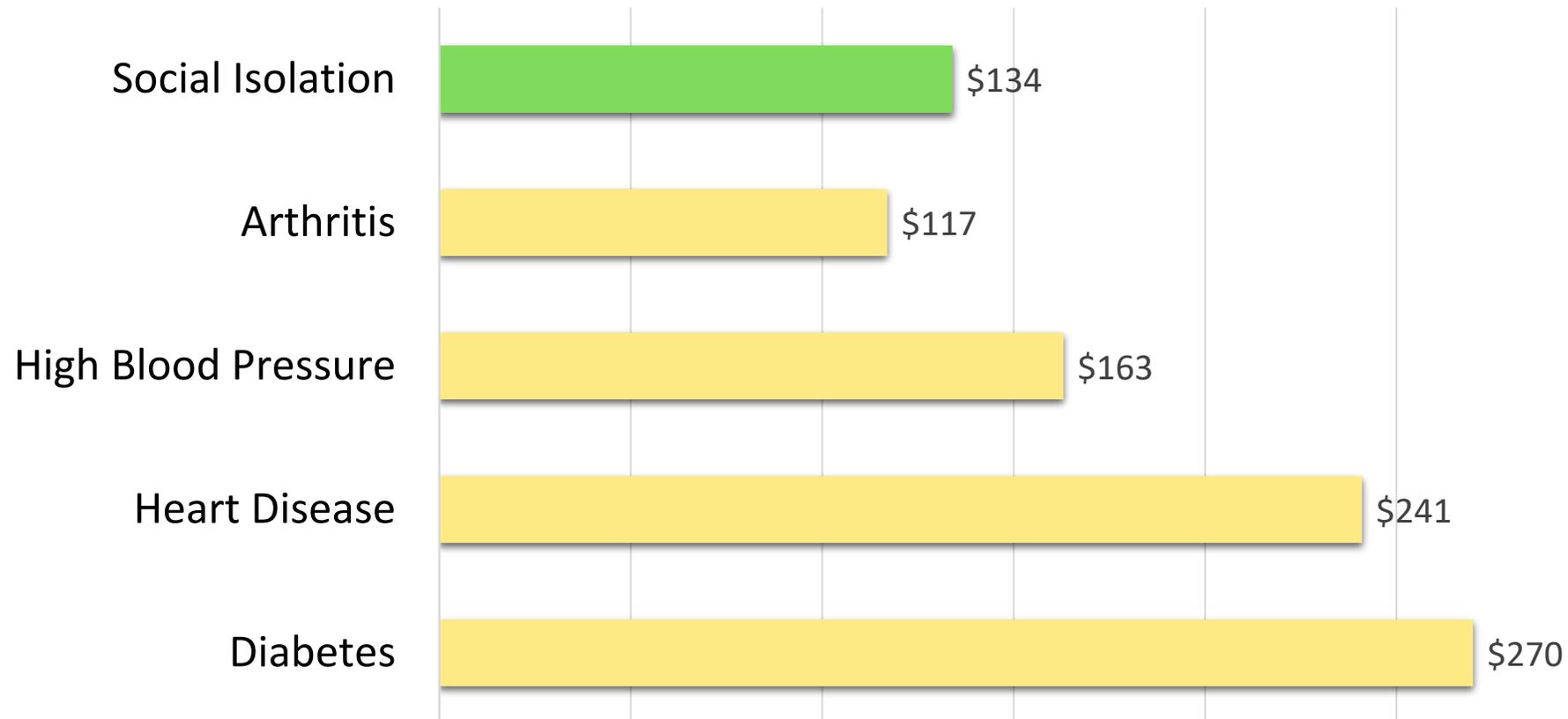
Death

Cancer\*



# Financial Impacts

## Additional Monthly Cost to Medicare for Socially Isolated Enrollee and Those With Chronic Conditions



# SPRC Key Steps to Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Older Adults



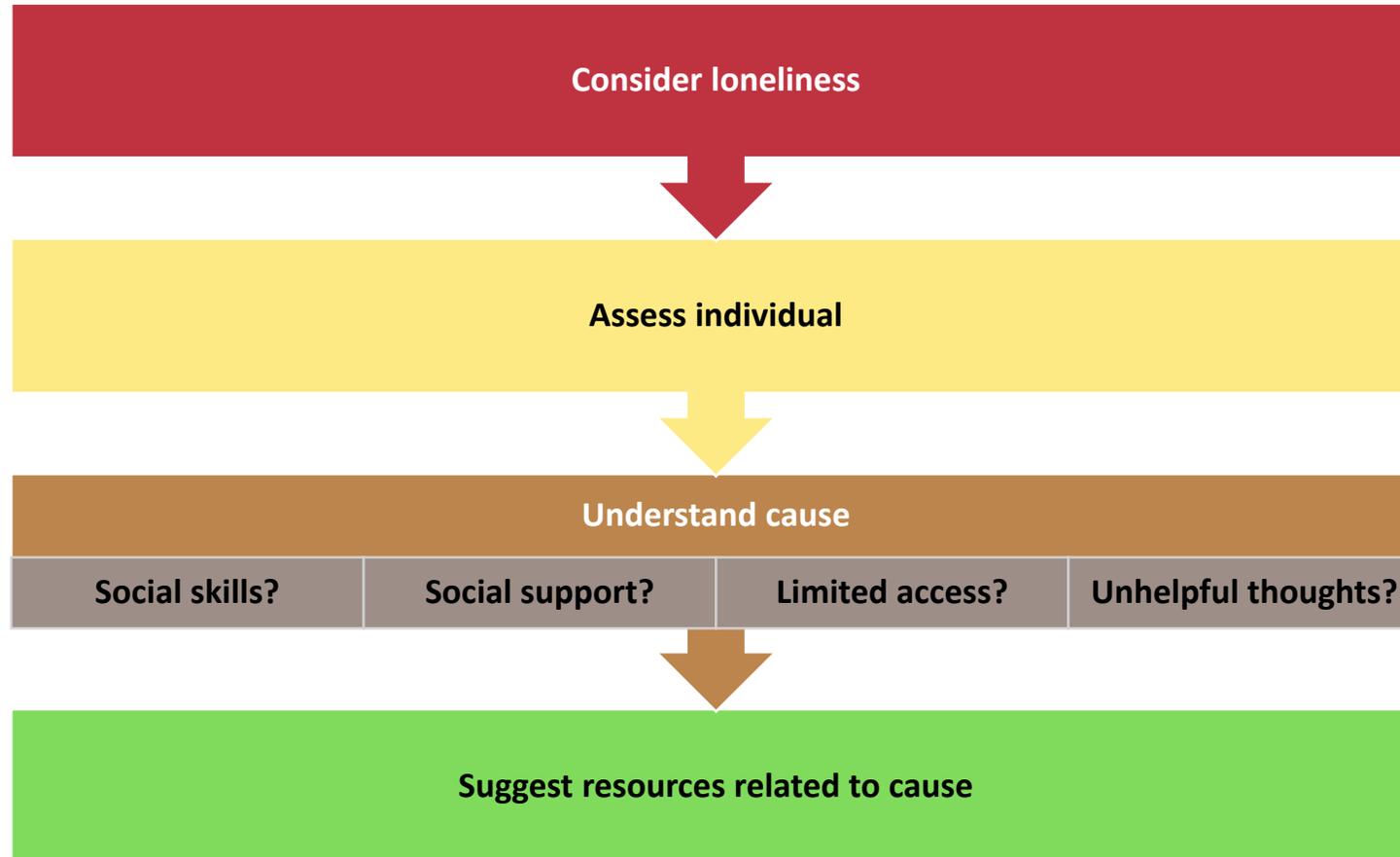
**UNDERSTAND** loneliness and social isolation and their effects on older adults

**IDENTIFY AND ASSESS** loneliness and its risk factors in older adults

**CONNECT** lonely and socially isolated older adults to services or resources *matched* to their personal needs and preferences



# SPRC Recommended Action Steps



# Panel Discussion



# ABCs for New Socializing Activities

- Social & Support Groups
- Education & Learning
- Teaching & Giving
- Working & Careers
- Volunteering & Advocacy



# Ideas for New Socializing Activities: Social Groups

- Social Groups
- Recreation Centers
- Senior Resources of Guilford
- Silver Sneakers & YMCA
- Houseparty.com
- Support Groups



# Ideas for New Socializing Activities: Education/Learning

- Shepherd's Center AIL
- University Emeritus Society
- Road Scholars/RS Virtual Classrooms
- The Seniors Centre Without Walls
- Masterclass
- Museums, orchestra, cooking school programs



# Ideas for New Socializing Activities: Teaching Others

- Bake Thanksgiving pies or cook gourmet cuisine
- Build a birdhouse
- Care for endangered animals
- Understand Baroque art
- Practice English or literacy skills
- Write a resume or build a website



# Ideas for New Socializing Activities: Work & Careers

- Continuing employment/jobs
- Encore careers
- Search examples
  - SimplyHired.com: variety of positions and self-employment
  - The Penny Hoarder & ZipRecruiter: includes virtual



# Ideas for New Socializing Activities: Volunteerism

- VolunteerMatch.org or the Volunteer Center: find activities
- Stay in touch: calls, postcards, gifts at the door
- United Way, A Simple Gesture: poverty, food...
- NCCJ, PIC: intercultural understandings
- Greensboro Beautiful: work at a distance
- Faith-based Organizations: food drives, mentoring children, etc.



# Ideas for New Socializing Activities: and . . .

- Advocacy
- Book groups
- Family meetings
- Online games with friends
- And on and on . . .



# Make a Plan for Socializing with a Creative Touch

- Make a plan for socializing, adjust as needed
- Identify and use resources and connections with others.
- Share what you do.
- Enjoy!



<http://e8pingtai.net/clipart-exercise-senior.html>



# Presenter Contact Information

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# Resources for Your Use

- Social Engagement resources on the Healthy Aging NC [website](#).
- Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) [website](#)
- [All Ages, All Stages NC initiative](#)
- NC Medical Journal article [\*Impact of Social Isolation on Older Adults in North Carolina\*](#)
- DAAS [Community Resources and Connections booklet](#), which has a map and contacts for area agencies on aging
- Flier for info on [Senior Centers in NC](#)
- AARP website: [www.AARP.org](http://www.AARP.org)

