The Healing Garden Institute (HGI): Promoting an integrated approach to disease management for vulnerable inner-city communities of Worcester, MA

Thidi Tshiguvho
The Healing Garden Institute

Follow this and additional works at: https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/chr_symposium

Part of the Alternative and Complementary Medicine Commons, Civic and Community Engagement Commons, Community-Based Research Commons, Community Health and Preventive Medicine Commons, and the Translational Medical Research Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 License.

https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/chr_symposium/2018/posters/10

This material is brought to you by eScholarship@UMMS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Community Engagement and Research Symposia by an authorized administrator of eScholarship@UMMS. For more information, please contact Lisa.Palmer@umassmed.edu.
The Healing Garden Institute (HGI): 
Promoting an integrated approach to disease management for vulnerable inner-city communities of Worcester, MA

**Background**
The Healing Garden Institute (HGI) is a project of Worcester Roots Project (WRP), whose goal is to empower individuals and communities to adopt integrated and holistic approaches to health, through education, action and research. The HGI has three components: the Healing Garden, Community Education Center, and the Research Institute.

**Healing Garden**
The healing garden was designed to promote the use of medicinal foods (vegetables, herbs and medicinal plants) to prevent and manage disease, as well as to promote overall wellbeing. Worcester’s inner-city residents suffer disproportionately from chronic diseases, of which diabetes, hypertension and obesity are most prevalent. For such communities, chronic disease management through dietary and lifestyle changes is challenging due to their burdening daily life struggles. The Healing Garden strives to improve community access to organic and medicinal foods by promoting year-round indoor and outdoor gardening of medicinal herbs and vegetables for everyday use and chronic disease management.

The outdoor garden is located on King Street in Worcester, MA, directly behind Stone Soup Community Resource Center. The garden serves as a demonstration of low budget gardening methods that suit the limited space often found in low-income, inner-city rental neighborhoods. The garden team demonstrates how porches, windows, fences, and plant pots can be used to provide year-round space for herbs and produce. The team also plans to demonstrate vertical gardening methods. The garden offers free soil testing for lead and other soil contaminants often found in historically industrial cities. The garden team identifies commonly used medicinal herbs and plants, and get experts to demonstrate how to cultivate and prepare them.

**Community Education Center**
HGI hosts social gatherings, health education workshops, and skill-based workshops (gardening, cooking sessions, herb preparations). Participants also learn about different treatment options for diseases, and exchange experiences with other community members suffering from similar conditions.

**Research Institute**
HGI believes in an integrated, holistic and cross-cultural approach to health. HGI does not consider using herbs as a substitute to pharmaceutical medications, but instead aims to objectively share knowledge on the available spectrum of treatment options for different diseases.

To that end, the research institute facilitates discussions among researchers, natural medicine practitioners, and community elders about different treatments of disease, the science behind the use of medicinal plants, and recent developments in the field. The institute will also produce a monthly online newsletter.

The garden on King Street is connected to the Stone Soup Aquaponics Greenhouse, whereby year-round planting techniques are scientifically tested.

We are currently developing capacity to conduct botanical experimentation and phytochemical analysis of medicinal plants, in collaboration with local and international institutions.

**How You Can Help!**
We need volunteers to help with garden design, working the garden in the summer, facilitating/presenting at health education sessions, participating in research, and more.

Contact us to help you set-up your indoor-outdoor garden.

**Sign up now!**

Healing Garden Institute
4 King Street
Worcester, MA 01610

Thidi Tshiguvho, Ph.D., Co-Director HGI / Contact: hgiworcester@email.com  |  http://www.worcesterroots.org/projects-and-programs/healing-garden-institute

Dr. Tshiguvho has worked as a professor of Biological Sciences (in South Africa), and Geography at Worcester State University and Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI).

An integrated approach to wellbeing.
http://s3.amazonaws.com/coldsore/list-of-common-alternative-therapies.html