

Promoting Action and Support Engagement through a Culturally Tailored Korean Early Memory Loss Education Program

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INTRODUCTION

Somang Society (Somang) is a California-based nonprofit organization that serves Korean American older adults and their family caregivers. Through the Southern California Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Dementia Capability Expansion Initiative, funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Somang implemented four culturally and linguistically adapted Early-Stage Memory Loss (EML) workshop series for Korean-speaking older adults and families experiencing memory concerns. Adapted from a program developed by Alzheimer's Orange County, each EML series consisted of three educational sessions and provided a low-barrier, community-based approach to dementia education, memory screening, and follow-up support. This project examined the impact of the EML series on dementia-related knowledge, understanding of memory screening, confidence in aging in place, and perceived support needs related to safety, daily functioning, and advance health care and legal planning.

METHODS

The workshop was delivered in three sessions with 87, 76, and 81 participants, respectively. This employed a pre-post design using self-administered surveys. Survey measures included true/false knowledge items and Likert-scale questions assessing perceived understanding and support needs. Because participants contributed repeated measurements over the series (each with three sessions), we used linear mixed-effects models to account for repeated observations within participants.

RESULTS

Strong Improvement		
Healthy Habits	●●●●●●●●●●	p < .001
Moderate Improvement		
ACP Support Needs	●●●●	p = .020
Living Alone Confidence	●●●	p = .044
Trend-Level		
Dementia Knowledge	●●	p = .083
Home Safety Support Needs	●●	p = .074
No Significant Change		
Remaining Outcomes	●	p > .10

Note: ACP: Advance Care Planning

HEALTHY HABITS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY

- Participants reported stronger healthy lifestyle practices after training

CONFIDENCE IN LIVING INDEPENDENTLY INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY

- Greater confidence in using social and community supports

RECOGNITION OF FUTURE PLANNING NEEDS INCREASED

- Participants reported greater awareness of legal and advance care planning needs

Outcomes with No Significant Change include:

- Memory screening importance, perceived support, home safety confidence, personal safety, ADL support needs

DISCUSSION

This educational intervention demonstrated promising outcomes for supporting aging in place. The largest improvement was observed in healthy habits, suggesting that behavior-focused educational content may be particularly responsive to short-term interventions. While dementia knowledge and home safety support needs showed positive trends, several outcomes remained stable, possibly due to high baseline scores or because these areas may require longer-term support beyond education alone.

PRACTICE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggest that brief community-based educational programs can help Korean American older adults build skills and confidence needed to age in place successfully. Educational efforts should include not only health promotion but also information on community resources, ACP strategies for maintaining independence. Policymakers and service providers may consider incorporating similar programs into aging services and community health initiatives to promote proactive planning, support autonomy, and enhance quality of life among AAPI older adults



This project is supported in part by grant number ACL-90ADPI0099, awarded to Somang Society, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201