

Age-Friendly Health Systems (AFHS) and Nurses Improving Care for Health System Elders (NICHE): How do they Work Together?

A guide to health systems considering their approach to improved care of older adults

Age-Friendly Health Systems is an initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) in partnership with the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA).

Background

NICHE originated as a hospital-based, nursing-centered program and continues in most settings to be so, which has brought great strength to better care for older patients. NICHE is funded by The John A. Hartford Foundation and is administered by the NYU College of Nursing in NYC. Recent efforts by NICHE have sought to extend the nursing led improvement of care for older adults to long-term care settings. NICHE has a 25 year history of convening care teams to consider ways to make change in their respective practice locations using the substantial resources of the program.

Age-Friendly Health Systems (AFHS) is also funded by The John A. Hartford Foundation and designed and implemented in partnership with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement is driven by the principles of continuous improvement and the pursuit of solutions at the scale of the problem. AFHS is a health system wide approach to ensuring that no matter where the older adult shows up in the health system --- the physician office, emergency department, hospital or post-acute setting:

- Older adults get the best care possible;
- Healthcare-related harms approach zero;
- Older adults are satisfied with their care; and
- Value is optimized for everyone in the system.

NICHE as the Backbone of an Age-Friendly Health System (AFHS)

We believe that NICHE serves, along with other major geriatric care programs, as a “backbone” to an AFHS in three important ways:

1. The active ingredients of the AFHS approach were derived from a thorough review of the core features of 17 geriatric care models, including NICHE.
2. Transformation of any health care system relies on a well-prepared workforce and leaders/manager committed to a strategic agenda to develop systems, structures, strategies to achieve that transformation. NICHE engages nursing leadership and nurses in those elements of transformation in a profound way and as fundamental step in the transformation of the full health system across disciplines.
3. The five health systems that are working with The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement have NICHE programs, along with other practice models (ACE Transition Models, PACE, HELP, BOOST, and GRACE) embedded in their systems. The system

experience is that not all of its older adults have the privilege of interacting with one or more of these programs and there are many disconnects as older adults transition from one care setting

to another. The lack of coordination leads to waste, harm and lost value to patients and systems. This fragmentation, and the attendant harms and wastes they create, across the continuum represent the primary targets that the AFHS initiative seeks to solve by guaranteeing a set of essential care principles to every older adult in the system at every point of contact with the system.

AFHS engages the full care team to achieve patient-centered care and builds on NICHE development of unit-level clinical leadership and the momentum of full frontline engagement. NICHE is a backbone to AFHS.

Similarities Between NICHE and Age-Friendly Health System (AFHS)

Both AFHS and NICHE address ways to improve the care of older adults in health care settings.

	AFHS	NICHE
Mission	Improve care for older adults across the system of health care	Improve care for older adults across the system of health care, leading with the inpatient care setting and educate nurses in best practices and position them as leaders to implement evidence-based protocols for care of older adults.
Aims	Providing coordinated and consistent Age-Friendly care (as defined by the 4M construct) in every care setting encountered by an older adult.	Systematic approach to improving care to older adults using NICHE materials developed over 25 years through a membership model
Dissemination	<p>AFHS principles, scale-up plans and resources will be available via the IHI website as they are developed.</p> <p>IHI has educational programs and conferences to help disseminate the care designs and best practices.</p> <p>IHI will always feature practical, usable 'how-to' resources that will be freely available to all participating systems and to a wider public audience as we seek to change national dialogue on what it means to have health systems that are age-friendly.</p>	<p>NICHE has a number of resources that can be obtained on a public website, and with paid membership, a rich array of materials in a secured website.</p> <p>NICHE has educational programs and conferences to help disseminate the care designs and best practices.</p>
Initial Funding	The John A. Hartford Foundation	The John A. Hartford Foundation
Measures	Uses existing measures and data systems	Uses existing measures and data systems

Unique Attributes of NICHE and Age-Friendly Health Systems (AFHS)

There are important distinctions between AFHS and NICHE which underscore NICHE as an important backbone to becoming an AFHS.

	AFHS	NICHE
Health System Sponsorship	Health system-wide chief executive officer is engaged in the decision to pursue the system-wide transformation of becoming an AFHS.	Chief Nursing Officer and alignment at mid and unit level is needed to support NICHE. NICHE's nurse-driven model and practice interventions, along with the outcome measures, are specific to nursing practice.
Health Care Setting	AFHS encompasses a cross-continuum, system wide, approach that begins wherever the older adult is—in the physician office, in homecare, rehabilitation care, or inpatient settings. AFHS is envisioned and shaped to go beyond the hospital admission.	Primary focus is the inpatient setting, though recently expanding into long-term care. Unit or department level
Value Proposition	Reliable delivery of Age-Friendly care across the health care settings – with every older adult, every day, everywhere an older adult is part of the health care system. Safe and effective care for a rapidly growing population segment through the redirection of quality, safety and care delivery resources to focus on delivery of proven, age-friendly practice.	NICHE develops the skills/competencies of the nursing workforce and galvanizes setting-specific change that can lead to system change. Proven 25 year track record of galvanizing nurses.
Implementation Team	Starts with an interdisciplinary approach and can be led by any discipline.	Starts with a nurse-led approach.
Outcome Measures	Based on existing measures reported to CMS and other regulatory and payor entities	Satisfaction and care improvement that are customized to the setting
Core of Operations	IHI, Cambridge MA, funded by JAHF for national movement	NYU College of Nursing self-funded for national movement
Content Framework	4 Ms: What matters, mentation, mobility, medications shaped into a prevention bundle, assessment checklist and selected set of high-leverage (affecting multiple 4M elements) clinical interventions	Use of evidence based assessment and evaluation tools to identify and address common geriatric syndromes. SPICES (skin problems, problems with eating/feeding, incontinence, cognition, evidence of falls, sleep disorders) and other variations to address common geriatric syndromes