Background

Advancements in medical science have improved the diagnosis and treatment of many diseases, which has prevented premature disability and death. Chronic diseases rank among the leading causes of death among elderly Alaska Natives (Easley, et al. 2004). Programs have been developed to address the epidemic numbers of patients with these chronic conditions, yet there are few educational tools to help self-manage medications used for these conditions.

Alaska Native elderly people, who are now living longer, are at a high risk of experiencing problems with medication therapy. Factors that increase this risk include: limited knowledge and poor health, exposure to many medications, difficulty in visiting their primary care physician, English language proficiency and health literacy, economic factors, and cultural beliefs and attitudes.

Purpose & Objectives

**Purpose:**
The purpose of this project is to identify medication self-management needs of the Alaska Native elderly, which can be used to promote safe, informed use of medications in this group and generate hypotheses for further exploration of culturally suitable material regarding education in people 65 and older. This will allow the elderly to maintain their autonomy, health, and well-being.

**Objectives:**
1) Identify the current health education level of elderly Alaska Natives/ American Indians (AN/AI) that receive services at Southcentral Foundation/ Alaska Native Medical Center.
2) Identify current limitations in medication self-management of elderly AN/AI receiving services at SCF/ANMC.
3) Evaluate current education and social needs regarding medications self-management of elderly AN/AI receiving services at SCF/ANMC.

Methods

**Study Design**
- Descriptive, cross-sectional pilot study
- Mixed methods approach (qualitative and quantitative data)

**Study Population**
- Clients with diabetes mellitus, congestive heart failure, hyperlipidemia, hypertension, general medication use in the elderly
- Ages 65+
- Able to respond to questions in English

Next Steps

This project begins June 1, 2010 and will be completed around December 31, 2010.