



# In the Spotlight

## Help Me Grow Champions

### Dr. Sherri Alderman



*Physician Champion  
Help Me Grow-Oregon*

**Dr. Sherri Alderman** is the Medical Director of the statewide universal developmental screening initiative called START (Screening Tools and Referral Training) a component of Help Me Grow-Oregon. She is also a developmental pediatrician at The Artz Center for Developmental Health & Audiology in Portland. The START collaborative, housed within the Oregon Pediatric Society, provides trainings on universal developmental screening and maternal depression of parents of young children within primary care practices and creates linkages to community referral networks statewide.

### Dr. R.J. Gillespie



*Physician Champion  
Help Me Grow-Oregon*

**Dr. R.J. Gillespie** served served as the founding Medical Director of START. He is currently the Medical Director of the Oregon Pediatric Improvement Partnership and a teacher at Portland State University. While at START, he led a team of stakeholders to modify the START curriculum from the Tennessee Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics for Oregon. He also served on the statewide taskforce for Maternal Depression and helped create an expansion module for START to train primary care providers to screen mothers in the first year of their child's life for peripartum mood disorders.

#### Why did you choose to become involved with HMG?

**Alderman:** *Help Me Grow* is a powerfully forward-thinking approach as an early primary care and prevention initiative in support of brain and mind development to best assure optimal developmental outcomes for children and families toward satisfying and productive lives across the life span.

**Gillespie:** Through my work with practices engaged in quality improvement, it's concerning to me that the burden of health care reform is falling on primary care practices to redesign how care is done. Primary care practices can't be (and shouldn't be) islands in the health reform process: this burden on providers can be alleviated with support from community agencies. Effective screening for developmental delays, family risk factors, and parental mental health disorders, etc., is dependent on a system that can receive the families in need. *HMG* as a single referral source for patient and family wraparound supports will be a vital piece of transforming the health care system.

#### Why do you think a physician in Oregon might find HMG helpful?

**Alderman:** Even in small towns, we have found that busy practitioners will for the first time meet face-to-face with their local early intervention representative with whom they have shared families for years. Often, the medical provider learns at the training that there is a home visitation program in their community that could be responsive to their identified concerns. Our relationships across the state have grown in breadth and depth, not only in terms of numbers of practices, clinicians, and community resource agencies with whom we have partnered, but also through our responsiveness to identified and expressed additional needs resulting in the development of new training modules. While we continue to provide the basic developmental screening and referral trainings, we are also now capable of returning to clinics and providing supplemental trainings of issues that arise within a practice after developmental screening has been successfully implemented.

**Gillespie:** I think we, as providers, are increasingly aware of the impacts of social determinants on the health status of children. However, it often feels like influencing these social factors are almost entirely out of our hands. The best we usually can hope for in the midst of a busy practice is to be able to hand a patient off to a trusted resource who can provide the social services that we can't keep track of or don't fully comprehend. It takes away the sense of futility and frustration that we often feel when we know a child is struggling because of these seemingly untouchable social determinants. Knowing that we have a chance of making an impact relieves some of that dissatisfaction we feel in our ability to help a family in need.

#### What do you hope HMG-Oregon will accomplish?

**Alderman:** START works toward building relationships with medical clinics with the goal of eventually allowing our team to join in partnership with each clinic in support of implementing universal screening and appropriate referral. We provide on-site trainings, screening tools, quality improvement techniques, and on-going technical support toward implementation of standardized, routine developmental screening as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. *Oregon communities across the state have been and will be touched and influenced in a positive way by HMG through the START initiative.*

**Gillespie:** Right now in our state, health care reform is crying for care coordination in practices; early childhood education is rallying around community-based care coordinators. Add health plans having care coordinators and hospital discharge coordinators, and pretty soon families will be inundated with care coordinators who will in turn need to be coordinated. I also feel that as a provider, I can't keep track of all of the community agencies in existence, what their eligibility requirements are, and whether or not they can take new patients. It would be advantageous to the provider community to have a trusted resource that helps keep tabs on these community resources to allow for more effective support to families. *My hope is that HMG will begin to pull the early childhood systems together into a cohesive single system of care coordination and wrap-around services.*