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Preventing and Reducing Falls in Assisted Living Facilities: An Educational Intervention

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Introduction

- By 2030, # of **older adults (OAs)** will double (WHO, 2011).
- **Falls** are leading cause of fatal & nonfatal injuries among **OAs** (CDC, 2014).
- By 2020, annual cost of fall injuries for **OAs** will reach \$30 billion (CDC, 2014).
- Many OAs reside in **assisted living facilities (ALFs)**, where 40% of residents experience a fall (NCHS, 2010).
- **First responders (FRs)** are commonly dispatched to **ALFs** on fall-related calls.
- Educating **ALF** residents and staff about strategies to prevent falls can help them avoid falls and reduce costs associated with emergency services.

Literature Review

Assisted Living Facilities

- 2.1 million OAs in ALFs, number is expected to double within the next 20 years (NCHS, 2010).

Falls in Older Adults

- $\frac{1}{3}$ of OAs fall annually, 50% of those will fall again (Letts et al., 2009).

Role of OTs in Fall Prevention


- OTs focus on function and environment
- Health professionals with broad training
- Active in fall prevention programs

Role of First Responders

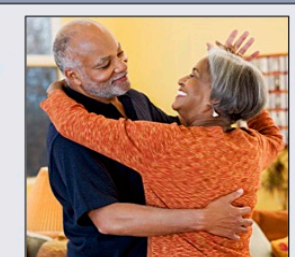
- FRs can bring awareness to fall prevention programs and provide basic fall prevention safety tips.

Statement of Purpose

- Develop and implement a fall prevention and awareness program at an ALF identified as a high utilizer of services by a local fire district



Fall Prevention for Older Adults



Fall Risk:

- $\frac{1}{3}$ of adults age 65 and older fall each year.
- After falling, a person may become afraid to fall again, resulting in limiting activities, leading to less movement and a greater chance of falling again.
- \$30 Billion spent each year treating older adults after a fall.
- 20,000 older adults die each year from a fall.
- 90% of hip fractures are caused by falls.
- 20% of people who fall and fracture a hip will die as a result.
- Increased awareness of safety can prevent falls!


More Information on Falls:

- **Center for Disease and Control:**
<http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultfalls.html>
- **Mayo Clinic:**
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/healthy-aging/in-depth/fall-prevention/art-20047358>
- **National Council on Aging:**
<http://www.ncoa.org/improve-health/falls-prevention/>

How to Prevent Falls:


At Home:

Add more lighting and organize clutter to prevent tripping over obstacles. Secure rugs to the floor. Wipe up spills immediately.




Review Medications with Doctor:


Bring list of ALL medications and supplements to the doctor. Mixing medications can cause dizziness and dehydration, leading to falls.



Make Healthy Choices:

- Drink water to prevent dehydration. (6 to 8 glasses of water per day is recommended.)
- Stay active: Decreased activity can lead to muscle loss and decreased endurance.
- Take Calcium to increase bone strength.
- Take Vitamin D for muscle strength.
- Eat 20-30 grams of protein to increase muscle growth.
- Visit your doctor before exercising and taking supplements.





Reading level: 7th grade. Readability Score: 6.5 (standard/average) SMOG Index
Created by Valerie DeRoos, OTS and Christine Kim, OTS; Dominican University of California

Project Evaluation

- Five point Likert scale and open-ended questions
- 100% positive participant feedback
- Participants stated, *"This is exactly what we needed"...* *"the information was very useful and relevant"...* *"I would recommend this program to a friend/family member."*

Discussion & Recommendations

- Implement: Fall prevention programs in ALFs to increase safety, decrease healthcare costs, reduce calls made to FRs for fall-related injuries.
- Recommend two 30-min sessions/wk X 4-8 wks to enhance retention of information.
- Involve caregivers and staff in program.
- **Potential new role for OTs and COTAs to consult with FRs to help prevent falls and improve QOL for ALF residents.**

Project Implementation

- Review of evidence-based fall prevention programs
- One hour sessions, once per week for four weeks
- 13-15 participants per session
- **Topics:** Balance and strength exercises, intrinsic and extrinsic fall risk factors, nutrition, hydration, sleep, vitamin D/bone health, & medication management

