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Pilot Study of the Effects of Tai Chi on Elderly Fall Risks

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Introduction:

- Among people over the age of 65, 1 in 3 people fall every year.
- In Vermont, falls are the leading cause of injury death among seniors.
- The practice of Tai Chi, an ancient mind-body art form that's evolved into a modern day fitness regimen, has been shown to reduce falls in this population.
- Studies have demonstrated additional benefits of Tai Chi including increased muscle strength, balance, mood, confidence and sleep.

“I’m not afraid of falling anymore.”

Objectives:

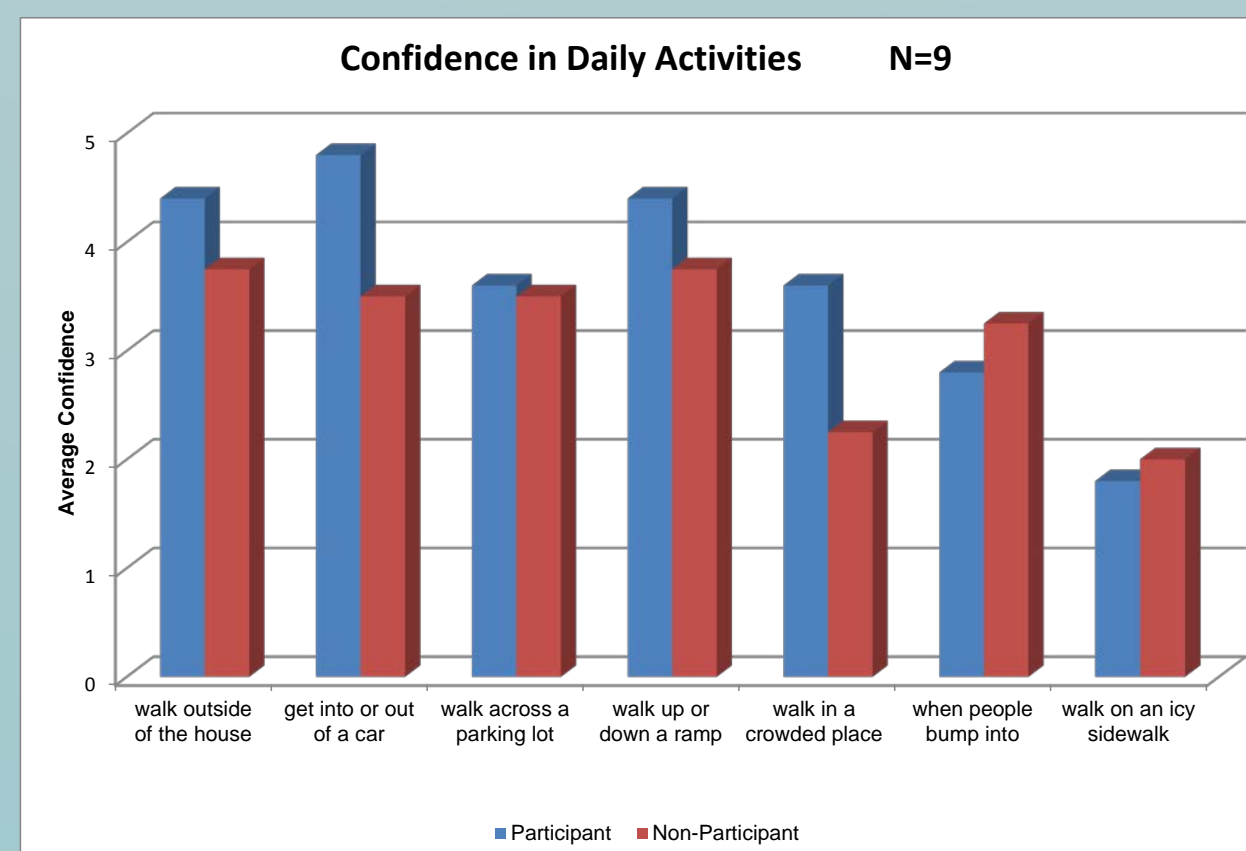
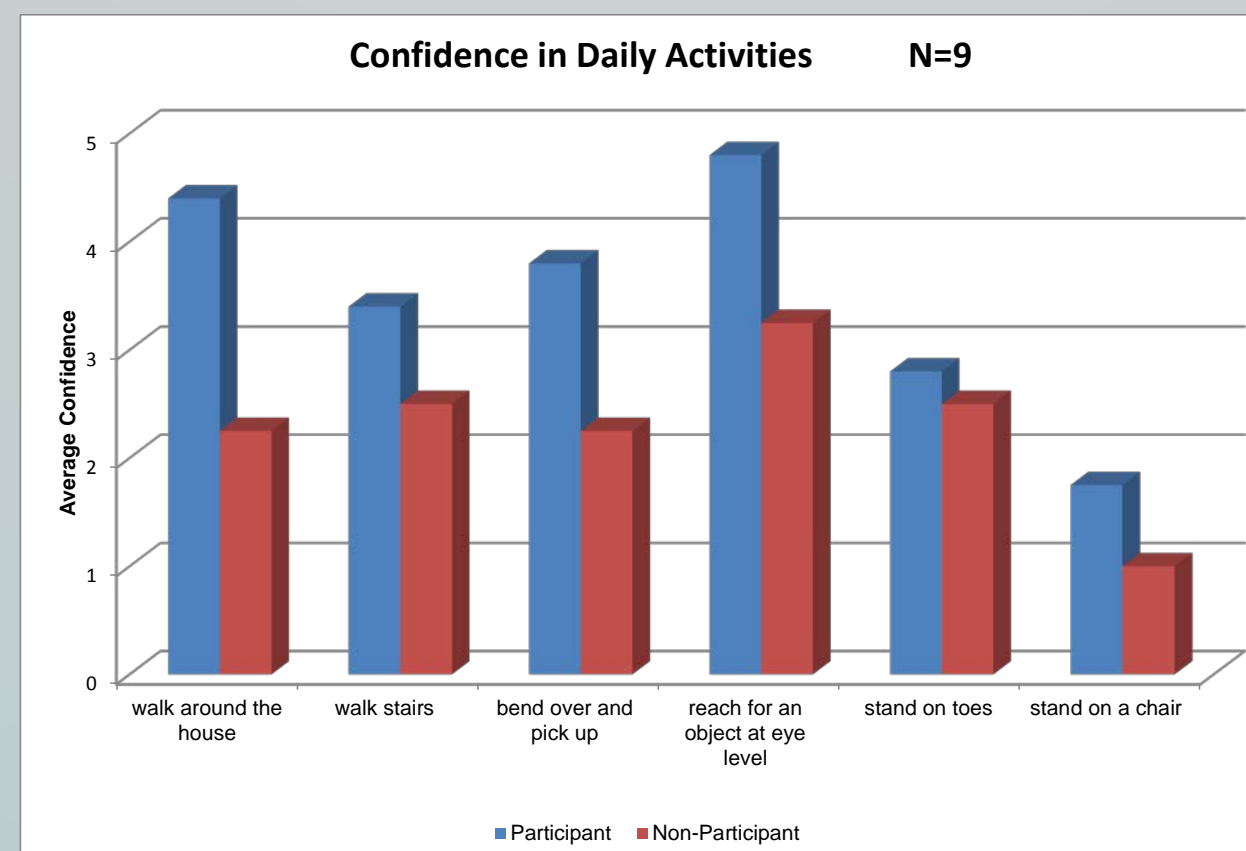
- To measure fall confidence in participants and non-participants of Tai Chi.
- To identify barriers to participation in Tai Chi at an integrative healthcare assisted-living facility.

Methods:

- 30 minute interviews with 9 of 14 residents (age > 60) of Living Well Residential Care Home (men = 3, women = 6).
- Interviews with Tai Chi participants included 7 demographic questions and 13 questions about sleep, mood, and confidence.
- Non-participants were asked 10 questions related to barriers to attending Tai Chi classes.
- All study participants completed the ABC scale for assessment of fear of falling.



“I feel stronger and it gives me continuity in my life.”



Results:

- Tai Chi participants appeared to rate themselves as more confident in performing daily tasks without falling in 11/13 categories on the ABC scale.
- Participants reported increased balance (80%) and confidence (80%) since starting Tai Chi.
- Non-participants reported physical limitations and time of class as barriers to participation.



“My knee pain is gone!”

Conclusions:

- Living Well reports their fall rate as 25%, which may be lower than that of the national fall rate of 33% for seniors (age > 65) as reported by the CDC.
- Tai Chi participants at Living Well report high levels of balance and confidence.
- Accommodating physical limitations and offering varying class times may increase participation in Tai Chi.



“I can go outside by myself and enjoy the weather.”

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