

Taking Steps Towards Fall Prevention with Stepping On

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Purpose: To evaluate effectiveness of evidence-based fall prevention workshops utilizing the Timed Get up and Go Test on community dwelling adults aged 65 and older.

Problem statement: In 2013, primary care data from our institution revealed 2,380 patients aged 75 and older experienced one or more falls. This positive screen indicated the need for more outpatient fall prevention interventions as falls often result in considerable injuries, additional health care costs, and functional limitations.

Background/evidence: Numerous randomized, controlled studies have shown group-based education and exercise classes substantially reduce fall risk. Stepping On, an evidence-based 7-week fall prevention workshop, teaches balance and strengthening exercises, home safety, medication management, and discussion of vision impairment in a small group setting.

Methods: In March 2013, a nursing-led interdisciplinary fall prevention workgroup offered Stepping On workshops with the assistance of locally administered grant money. Initially, workshop leaders experienced many program barriers associated with internal consultation errors, workshop visibility, patient attendance, and staff availability. By 2015, workshop leaders had overcome implementation barriers and were running successful workshops for community dwelling adults age 65 and over. Stepping On workshops were administered by 2 locally trained facilitators and guest speakers in physical therapy, vision, community safety, and pharmacy.

Results: From March 2013 to December 2015, a total of 142 patients had been referred to Stepping On by eleven different departments with 51 (36%) patients having attended workshops. An expected outcome for those who completed the series is improved balance and gait. The Timed Get Up and Go (TUG) test is a validated method to assess balance, gait, and fall risk. The lower the TUG score (in seconds), the less likelihood patients are to fall. Among 25 participants who completed the full 7-week Stepping On workshops, there was an average reduction in TUG scores of 3.6 seconds. Workshop participants reported increased confidence and knowledge in fall prevention strategies.

Conclusion: Stepping On was a successful nursing-led workshop that reduced TUG scores and improved patient knowledge about fall prevention.

