

Community falls prevention presentations: participants with high versus low knowledge

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Background

Increasing community knowledge and awareness of falls prevention is an important component of a comprehensive strategy to reduce falls and falls-related injuries in Western Australia (WA). To increase older adult awareness of falls prevention, Injury Matters, in partnership with the Department of Health WA, provides peer education presentations to older adults through the Stay On Your Feet[®] program. The peer presentations are delivered by trained older adult peer educators and are based on adult learning theories and behaviour change methods. The following presents results from the process evaluation of the Stay On Your Feet[®] peer presentations.

Aim

To assess the effectiveness of the Stay On Your Feet[®] peer presentations on participant awareness, motivations and beliefs to prevent falls.

Methods

Between 2015 and 2018, quantitative pre and post presentation surveys measured knowledge, motivation and beliefs of falls prevention. Participants were asked to self-rate their agreement to statements using a Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree). Paired samples t-tests were conducted to compare pre and post knowledge, motivation and beliefs.

Results

In total, 1,604 participants fully completed pre and post surveys. Respondents were categorised into low (scored ≤ 3 for understanding of why people fall, $n=190$) and high knowledge groups (scored ≥ 4 for understanding why people fall, $n=1,414$) based on the pre survey self-rated knowledge assessment. The high knowledge group had no significant change in knowledge ($p=0.458$), a slight decrease in motivation ($p<0.001$) and an increase in belief that falls are preventable ($p=0.045$) post the peer presentation. Participants within the low knowledge group significantly increased in knowledge ($p<0.001$) and belief that falls are preventable ($p<0.001$), and had no significant changes in motivation ($p=0.847$) post the peer presentation.

Discussion and conclusions

Overall, messages from the presentations may be reaffirming beliefs within the high knowledge group, while increasing knowledge within the low knowledge group. In a behaviour change hierarchy of effects model, participants move from recognition, or awareness of the issue, through to behaviour change.¹ In the peer presentations, participants with low knowledge started to move along the behaviour change model by initially increasing their knowledge base.

How the research pushes the boundaries

These findings provide directions for educating older adults on falls prevention, particularly focusing on older adults with low knowledge of falls prevention.

References

1. Kite, J. *et al.* From awareness to behaviour: Testing a hierarchy of effects model on the Australian Make Healthy Normal campaign using mediation analysis. *Prev. Med. Rep.* **12**, 140–147 (2018).