

A model of service delivery and best use of Occupational Therapy staff within a community falls prevention service.

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Introduction

Falls and consequent injury are common amongst older people [1]. Local health and social care services introduced a Community Falls Prevention Programme (CFPP) in 2006, based on evidence and supported by government policy. The CFPP patient pathway sees an average of 221 clients/month (2008 data), within a population of 184,000 people aged ≥ 65 . Occupational therapy (OT) is a key component of this service [1].

Objective

To describe the patient pathway for the CFPP and the key role of OTs in maintaining quality/effectiveness of the fall risk assessment and intervention process.

Description

An Occupational Therapy support worker (OTSW), who has a specific competency based qualification and has received specialised knowledge and skills training by an OT, completes a home based Falls Risk Screening and Data Collection Tool which guides referral on to appropriate services. An agreed, customised, action plan is generated. The OT intervenes where further assessment to explore reduced confidence, fear of falling, loss of independence since their fall, risk behaviours and hazards is required. The OTSW is supported by regular supervision meetings to maintain quality care.

Discussion

By engaging OTSW time is freed for the OTs to target those clients in most need of interventions to maintain, restore and or improve functional abilities, health and well being and prevent further falls. They also support the OTSW in the delivery of group educational sessions to empower the client to make changes to attitude, behaviour and lifestyle to prevent or manage further falls.

Conclusions

The collaborative working of OT and OTSW as demonstrated in the CFPP service pathway ensures efficient use of resources and skills whilst providing an effective and quality service to the older person who has suffered a fall.

Contribution occupational therapy practice.

Provides a model of efficient use of skills mix of OT staff, both qualified and support staff, to provide an efficient and effective service for the prevention of falls in community dwelling older people.

References

[1] Clemson L, et al. Environmental interventions to prevent falls in community-dwelling older people: a meta-analysis of randomized trials. *J Aging Health*.2008;20:954-71.