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Making informed mobility choices: Evaluation of a community based education program targeting healthy older people.

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Introduction:

Health, occupation and community engagement are important for successful ageing: independent personal mobility and/or vehicle transportation may be critical to support these goals. Educational campaigns to promote maximum mobility and safety for older people should be a policy priority (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). This paper describes the implementation and evaluation of a community mobility educational intervention targeting older adults. Since 2006, occupational therapy driver assessors have delivered this program to over 100 clubs and groups.

Objectives: To

- a) describe the evidence-based program development which adopted a collaborative health promotion framework
- b) discuss evaluation outcomes, and
- c) suggest broader applications for this program model

Methods:

Program evaluation incorporated a host group co-ordinator survey. The self-completion questionnaire collected data via items related to demographic as well as content and delivery items. Participants indicated ratings on a likert scale and provided comments in relation to community mobility and road safety priority messages: data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Results:

Group co-ordinators were very satisfied with program content and delivery: they found the presentation practical and relevant to club member needs and were willing to recommend the program to other groups. Analysis of open-ended questions revealed that the most important "take home" messages were related to availability and options for: driver assessments, vehicle modifications, driver rehabilitation and alternative transportation.

Conclusion:

Evaluation demonstrated that development and implementation successfully met program objectives including delivery of community mobility road safety messages within a health promotion framework. This delivery mode may be less threatening to older people compared to traditional methods, facilitating higher rates of information retention and application: further research is required to investigate this potential relationship.

Contribution to practice/evidence base:

Stakeholders have indicated strong support for the program and additional community organisations with an interest in road safety are now partners in further implementation. This program development process and delivery framework may provide a practice model for other important health related messages targeting older people.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2001). Ageing and Transport - Mobility Needs and Safety Issues. Geneva: Author.