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Active lifestyle all your life – the development and evaluation of an occupation based multifactorial falls-prevention program among older individuals at risk

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Introduction: Fall injuries among older individuals are increasing worldwide and there is a need for prevention addressing a range of possible factors that cause accidental falls. Although contemporary research recommends a multi-factorial approach in fall-prevention the actual implementation in primary care is limited.

Objectives: To develop and evaluate an occupation based multifactorial group-based falls-prevention programme among community-dwelling older adults at risk of falling.

Method: The intervention program was developed based on a review of the latest evidence in fall prevention and in cooperation with occupational therapists and physiotherapist in primary care. The program was implemented in nine primary care units in Stockholm, Sweden. The evaluation methods were done within RCT-design using both quantitative and qualitative method.

Results: The quantitative findings showed a significant decrease of the risk of falling, in fear of falling and in perceived participation problems.

The qualitative findings indicated that the program had an important impact on the participants' engagement in valued activities. The group format worked as an amplifier in the translation of expert knowledge to applied knowledge, which led to increased awareness and behavioural change towards new and safer habits in everyday life.

Conclusion: The program creates opportunities for self-initiated and tailored behavioural change of significant importance to the individuals at risk.

The knowledge derived from this evaluation could be of use as a prevention program model for implementing Evidence Based Practice in primary health care and could serve as one attempt to plan ahead, and support active ageing by using an occupational perspective.