

Falls prevention in primary health care: Perspectives of occupational therapists and other allied health professionals

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Introduction: Falls are a serious threat to the health and well-being of older people in the community, and need to be prevented at a primary care level. As part of an Australian research study: **Integrated Solutions for Sustainable Falls Prevention (iSOLVE)** in primary care, occupational therapists and other allied health professionals working in the community participated in free, face to face evidence-based workshops in Northern Sydney to upskill them in effective falls prevention practice.

Objectives:

i) To explore falls prevention practice in primary care, and ii) To monitor any change after attending the workshops.

Methods: Surveys were distributed at baseline prior to the workshops, and at three and 12 months following the workshops. All survey data were merged, and analysed using descriptive techniques.

Results: Twelve workshops were attended in the North Sydney Primary Health Network area on falls prevention topics: Exercise (x3, n=55), Home safety (x3, n=66), Medications (x2, n=36), the LiFE program (x2, n=71) and foot and ankle interventions (x2, n=116). All disciplines attended any of the workshops. Nearly half (n=129, 47%) worked in private practice. The most common source of referrals was self-referral from an older person. Whilst some standardised assessments were used, the most frequently used assessments were non-standardised (n=83, 43%), and 73 (36%) used no assessment at all. Early findings show small changes in practice and significant improvements in confidence following the workshops.

Conclusion: Gaps were identified in practice. Further support is needed to facilitate the sustainability of fall prevention practice in primary care settings.