

Preventing falls, a whole of community approach and the iSOLVE project

NSML is in partnership with the University of Sydney (USYD) and the NSW State Falls Program (Clinical Excellence Commission) in a five year NHMRC project on falls prevention.

The project is being led by Professor Lindy Clemson from the Faculty of Health Sciences, USYD, and aims to establish a multi-disciplinary pathway model for falls prevention. The project is coordinated by Dr Amy Tan.

Here is a snap shot from Professor Clemson on current evidence and practice around falls prevention in the community, plus some early information about the iSOLVE project.

We know that falls can be prevented. There is strong evidence that balance and strength exercises, home safety interventions and medication reviews are effective in preventing falls in older people.^{1,2,3,4}

Despite strong evidence for effective interventions, the rate of falls is increasing nationally.

The prevalence of falls continues to increase with national hospitalisation statistics showing significant increases over the past decade for both men and women. Hospitalisation rates in Northern Sydney have been consistently higher than the NSW average.⁵

A major problem for evidence uptake is that studies which test fall interventions provided within a research context have much better outcomes than trials reflecting usual practice which rely on referral to health care providers. Studies have consistently shown that referral alone is not effective. Solutions may include the development of referral pathways that link people at risk of falls to local evidence based fall prevention interventions as well as community education.

Involving GPs in falls prevention.

Older people think that a fall may be just part of 'ageing' and do not think that they can actively do things to prevent a future fall. Clinical guidelines on addressing adherence to fall prevention varies and so GPs' advice to patients may differ. Primary care physicians report a number of barriers to evidence based care including lack of time during visits, other more pressing issues and a lack of educational materials. Targeted interventions are needed to improve fall prevention practice.

The iSOLVE project (Integrated SOLUTIONs for sustainable falls preVENTion)

The aim of the project is to establish integrated processes and pathways between general practice, allied health services, and programs to identify older people at risk of falls and engage a whole of primary care approach to falls prevention. The iSOLVE model aims to improve access to appropriate falls prevention interventions for older people, offer general practices routine and efficient methods of identifying and screening people at risk of falls, ensure ongoing knowledge acquisition by GPs and all healthcare professionals and

organisations who could offer falls prevention interventions.

Dr Amy Tan is the iSOLVE Research Project Coordinator. Dr Tan's background is in pharmacy and research. She will be actively seeking participation in surveys and interviews to review resources, and explore barriers and enablers of implementation and education opportunities.

The team will also be conducting a randomised trial to test if the support and referral pathways embedded in general practices are effective in improving access to, and outcomes from, local falls prevention options.

For enquiries on the project and how you can get involved, contact Amy Tan at atan@nsm.com.au. Or visit www.nsm.com.au/isolve.

References

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