

Implementation of a Fall Prevention Program in Nursing Homes: Facilitators and Barriers



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Background

Falls in nursing homes are a serious health problem that affect more than 50% of nursing home residents (Kilian, Lamb, Buchele, Lall & Lindemann, 2008). The CDC reports that between 50-75% of nursing home residents fall each year, twice the rate of falls for older adults living in the community ("Falls in nursing," 2012). The injury rates are also higher for nursing home residents and 10-25% of these falls result in fractures, lacerations, or hospitalization (Hignett and Masud, 2006). There is evidence that exercise and balance training can reduce an older adult's risk for falls. Exercise can modify the intrinsic fall risk factors and as a result prevent falls and reduce fall related fractures (Carter, Kannus & Khan, 2001).

Purpose

Identify the barriers and facilitators that may impact the success in implementing a balance and exercise program for nursing home residents with the intent to reduce the prevalence of falls. This program, Fit4Life, was funded under the Minnesota Performance-Incentive Based Payment Program (PIPP).

Sample

As part of a larger study evaluating the PIPP program, interviews were completed with 35 staff in 15 nursing homes. Interviews were conducted with project leaders, directors of nursing, administrators, registered nurses, certified nursing assistants, activities and therapy staff, quality improvement and clinical coordinators, exercise technicians and case managers.

Method

Thirty-five (35) interview transcripts were reviewed to identify the barriers and facilitators in preventing falls in nursing homes. The responses to these questions were then coded by identifying themes of barriers and facilitators and the results were quantified.

References

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Barrier	Number	Example of Theme
Buy in	85	"We had a couple of exercise classes here and there and a couple of different things and we were often told by this generation that we don't exercise. I've worked hard my whole life and I'm...I was thinking...I'll admit it I'm not a negative person. This isn't going to work"
Resources	20	"Space probably was the biggest issue in the beginning. We outgrew our room pretty fast."
Time constraints	16	"Well, my biggest challenge is always the time issue because I do work on the floor as a nurse's aide, and I also do the restorative nursing program here – I arrange our motions and exercise classes, and so finding the time was a big challenge. It seemed like it was a little more time consuming that I think we anticipated in the beginning."
Health of residents	15	"And the challenge is I would have to say the biggest challenge is chronic diseases. How do we get past this? How can we help our residents more with these? Because we have shown that we can keep our residents maintaining to improving on a daily basis, but when you throw in a chronic disease, that is challenging not just for us but for them."

Facilitator	Number	Example of Theme
Buy in	144	"You have to create buy in to it, you have to be able to first of all know the people you're serving, what their needs are and what they want."
Seeing positive results	65	"So over these last three months, I think it's been another huge success as far as we're making our numbers and we're making our goals. So now staff are more motivated to keep up with it, you know, to put that extra effort in."
Communication	62	"You just can't put it up in the break room and think it's all going to be implemented. You know, we talk about it, we talk about it every week, we talk about it every day, you know, what's going on and how we are going to to keep these people from falling."
Teamwork	61	"I think that's another crucial aspect of it, you know, when we communicate, when we bring groups together, when we bring new committees together, we really try to have a good representation of everybody that works here because everybody that works here is involved with every project that we do in some way."

Limitations

The project involved nursing facilities from one state and they were not chosen at random. Inter-rater reliability was not assessed because transcripts were reviewed and coded by one researcher.

Summary of Findings

Eleven themes were identified as barriers and seventeen themes were identified as facilitators. Buy in from staff, families, and residents are both a strong facilitator and barrier. Factors that facilitated fall prevention activities were clear and consistent communication, strong leadership that fosters open dialogue between staff members, interdisciplinary teamwork and seeing positive results. A few of the most common challenges were time constraints, the health of residents, resources including staff, space and equipment, and communication.

Recommendations

Practice: Given the positive outcomes of the balance and exercise program, such programs should be replicated in nursing homes. To ensure the success and sustainment of these programs, resident, family and staff acceptance of the program should be addressed when planning the implementation of the program.

Research: Other types of fall prevention programs have been designed and their outcomes reported in the literature. Understanding the barriers and facilitators for different fall prevention programs would provide important information in selecting those with the highest impact and most effective organizational implementation and acceptance.

