FACTORS IMPACTING ADHERENCE TO A MULTIFACTORIAL FALL PREVENTION
PROGRAM - A MATTER OF BALANCE

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE: Falls among older adults are a significant public health problem. “A Matter of Balance” (MOB) is a multifactorial fall prevention program that aims to improve participants’ falls self-efficacy and increase physical activity. The purpose of this study was to examine self-reported outcomes associated with the MOB program in order to explore participants’ perspectives and program adherence.

SUBJECTS: Subjects included a convenience sample of 28 community dwelling older adults who were enrolled in 4 MOB programs in the Twin Cities. Ten of these subjects also participated in 4 focus groups.

METHODS: This study utilized a mixed methods design that incorporated both survey and focus group interview data. Survey data were collected before the program and immediately after, 6-weeks, and 6-months post-program. Survey items addressed demographics, general health, falls management, exercise behavior, and fall occurrence. Focus groups were scheduled 3 to 5 months post-program and led by a principle investigator and student researchers. Semi-structured interview questions focused on participants’ experiences, recommendations that were or were not implemented, and motivation for and barriers to change.

ANALYSES: Demographic characteristics were summarized using descriptive statistics. Quantitative data were analyzed with repeated-measures ANOVA and paired t-tests. Qualitative data from the focus groups were transcribed and used a constant comparative method to describe, code, and group to identify themes and sub-themes.

RESULTS: 70.4% of the participants completed all 4 surveys. Statistically significant improvements were identified for 2 survey items: “I can find a way to reduce falls” and “I can protect myself if I fall”. No significant change in exercise frequency or fall occurrence was identified. Qualitative data revealed several themes including: awareness, motivators for attendance, class learning environment, current adherence, facilitators and barriers to adherence, and recommendations for future programming.

CONCLUSION: Overall, MOB’s effectiveness was evidenced by increased awareness which may be related to improved falls management, self-efficacy, and motivation.

IMPLICATIONS: For improved long-term adherence to recommendations, future fall prevention programming should identify the rationale for given exercises as well as give suggestions for how participants can integrate these into their daily lives. Additionally, a follow up program after completion of the original program may be beneficial for participants to sustain peer support and accountability.