BALANCE SCREENS FOR LOW INCOME OLDER ADULTS

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No funding

Service learning project, no IRB was required.

PURPOSE: In the U.S., more than one third of adults aged 65 and older report at least one fall a year. The purpose of this project is to provide balance screens and education to the low income, older adult population in the St. Paul, MN area to prevent falls and improve their quality of life. This community has over 600 units of low income housing and 476 households, where 87% of the population lives independently. This community could benefit from our program as 41% of the population is over the age of 51 and 21% is over the age of 62. With a large percentage of the population living alone and potentially at risk for falls, this group could greatly benefit from falls risk assessment and some prevention information.

DESCRIPTION: We conducted a community needs assessment and determined the community and population based on the data we gathered. We had six stations set up at the initial screening: patient intake, vitals, three balance assessments, and exit counseling. A follow-up visit was scheduled a couple of months later for a recheck.

OBSERVATIONS: A survey was distributed to the residents with four questions to evaluate the effectiveness and applicability of our balance screen and falls prevention education. When averaging the results of the follow up survey, 94% of the residents were highly satisfied with the program.

CONCLUSION: The results of this project identified a high satisfaction rate with the balance screens and education provided to them for future fall prevention.

IMPORTANCE: The importance of this project was to screen and identify individuals that may be at a falls risk in the various St. Paul Public Housing system. This project emphasizes the importance of providing care and education on improving their health to underserved populations.