The impact of peer education on older adults falls prevention behaviours

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Background

Since 2001, Injury Matters, in partnership with the Department of Health Western Australia, has delivered peer education to older adults regarding falls prevention through the Stay On Your Feet® program. Peer presentations incorporate adult learning theories, behaviour change techniques and are delivered by trained peer educators. Aiming to increase falls prevention knowledge and motivation to practice falls prevention strategies, in 2015 the peer presentation program was reviewed and updated to include single falls prevention messages. The following describes the evaluation findings from the revised Stay On Your Feet® campaign-specific peer presentations.

Activity

Over the past three years, 96 campaign-specific presentations were delivered to 2,366 community members regarding focused messages, “Make Your Home Safer”, “Check Your Medicines”, “Build Your Balance”, “Move Your Body”, and “Fuel Your Body”. After each presentation, attendees were invited to complete a survey to evaluate the impact of the peer presentations on attendees’ falls prevention knowledge and motivation to practice falls prevention strategies.

Conclusion

Results from 724 older adults who attended campaign specific falls prevention peer education sessions indicated that 83.5% of attendees understood the risk factors for falls (n=605), 83.3% agreed that falls are preventable (n=603), and 87.8% were motivated to reduce their risk of having a fall improved after participating in the peer education session (n=636). These findings, alongside previous research, indicate that peer education is an effective tool for discussing falls and falls prevention methods within community older adults and remains an effective strategy within a broader state-wide falls prevention program.