



Easy Does It Fall Prevention Program: A Quality Assurance Project

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Abstract

Falls are one of the leading causes of injury in community-dwelling older adults (Galet et al, 2018). These incidents can have potentially serious consequences and contribute significantly to morbidity and mortality rates of older adults (Jensen & Padilla, 2011). As this population continues to grow, fall-related injuries will have an increasing impact on the U.S. healthcare system (Medical Advisory Secretariat, 2008).

Easy Does It is a ten-week fall prevention program that integrates physical, behavioral and environmental domains with the basic principles of occupational therapy, emphasizing the functional applications of movement patterns found in yoga, tai chi, and the Feldenkrais Method. By relating these traditions to everyday occupations, the program enables participants to directly apply these strategies to their daily routines thus targeting everyday movements that can precede a fall.

This quality assurance project was conducted by occupational therapy students from SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University in order to evaluate the efficacy of The Easy Does It Fall Prevention Program. In this mixed methods study, participants reported increased body awareness, decreased fear of falling, and improved participation in everyday activities.

Methodology

Participants

- 5 individuals
- Inclusion criteria
 - Tolerate at least 90 minutes of sitting
 - Commute to Mount Sinai Beth Israel Bernstein Pavilion once a week for 10-weeks

Data Collection

- Quantitative data
 - Activities-Specific Balance Confidence (ABC) scale
 - Timed Up and Go Dual Task (TUG-DT) assessment
 - 2 sets of Likert scale questions
- Qualitative data
 - Participant interviews

Data Analysis

- Quantitative data collected on the first and final sessions was compared using paired samples t-tests and regression analyses
- Qualitative data were transcribed and coded
- Emerging themes were identified

Emerging Themes

Improved Body Awareness

- At the end of each session participants rated their overall sense of body awareness, including their sense of stability while standing, walking and reaching. Their responses indicated improvements in awareness over the course of the program.
- A member of the program explained that she had a tendency of walking fast, however, after the program she became more cautious of controlling her speed while walking thus becoming more aware of her foot placement against the floor.
- One participation demonstrated awareness of her knees saying, “I’m more aware of what I’m doing, like I’m really remembering my knees, cause I didn’t realize I was locking them.”

Decreased Fear of Falling

- Five out of six participants interviewed discussed a mild to severe fear of falling before beginning the program; since completing the program these participants expressed a decline in their fear of falling.
- One participant said, “now I don’t think of it as much, I still do think of it, but I try to just walk with a little bit more assurance and propel myself forward.”

Application to Functional Activities

- Participants were asked to identify two functional activities and rate their current performance and satisfaction before and after the program. The average post score was higher than the average pre score for all five participants when analyzing these results.
- Rather than moving isolated body segments, participants learned to use full body movements during activities, such as opening a heavy door.
- One participant said, “[when] reaching for the canister, I don’t just reach with my arm, I turn my body and I reach with both hands.”

Discussion

The Problem

- Falls are a public health hazard and place a significant financial strain on the healthcare system.
- While falls pose a major threat to the health of the elderly population, these incidents are largely preventable.
- It is our role as healthcare providers to educate clients on effective means of reducing fall risk.

The Value of Easy Does It

- A multifaceted approach addressing the following factors:
 - Physical
 - Behavioral
 - Environmental
- Incorporates the basic principles of occupational therapy by emphasizing the functional applications of specific movement patterns.
 - This empowers participants to directly apply strategies learned in the program to their daily routines, thus increasing participation.
- Individuals who participated in the program noted improvements in their balance and body awareness, as well as a decreased fear of falling.

Takeaway for Healthcare Professionals

- The connection between movement and function can support the safety and wellbeing of community-dwelling older adults and reduce their risk of falls.
- The involvement and collaboration of various healthcare providers with occupational therapists is integral to a complete fall prevention initiative.
- Providers who work with older adults should emulate the principles of the Easy Does It Program through their own fall prevention initiatives.

References

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