



Preventing falls among seniors

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Falls are common among older people. They can result in surgeries, like hip replacements, hospitalization, and a reduction in general confidence and mobility. They are the leading cause of injury-related death and hospitalization in Nova Scotia.

In addition to the trauma for the individuals and their families, the economic impact of fall-related injuries is substantial and has a considerable effect on emergency room usage since many falls lead seniors to seek out the nearest emergency room.

Doug Sinclair is the Head and Clinical Chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Dalhousie University and the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre. Falls are not new to him, and he began this study to see if it is possible to reduce the number of subsequent falls among seniors through education and home visits.

Seniors who agreed to participate in the study were divided into a control group and an intervention group. The members of the intervention group were visited at home by a Care Coordinator from Home Care Nova Scotia who identified areas in their homes that might cause falls in the future. A physiotherapist or occupational therapist delivered further information about falls.

Participants from both groups were then monitored for two months to track the number of falls each group had. "There is strong evidence," Dr. Sinclair says, "that falls can be prevented."

As a result of this small study, Dr. Sinclair is proposing a larger, multi-centre, randomized, controlled study to look into the most effective ways to deliver falls education. "Falls," he notes, "are a major concern. Development of effective interventions will reduce healthcare costs associated with treating injuries – and with the personal costs of these injuries."

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