



*Delaware Coalition for Injury Prevention
Falls Prevention Team*

Name of Project: Delaware Senior Aquatic Fall Prevention Project

Name of Organization: Delaware Coalition for Injury Prevention

Project Description:

The Senior Aquatic Fall Prevention Project (SAFPP) was a successful, innovative pilot with the goal to prevent falls among seniors. For six weeks, twice a week, in one hour sessions, seniors performed specific water (pool) exercises designed to prevent falls. Pre assessment provided baseline functioning; post assessment allowed comparisons for cognition, depression, balance, and stability. Before each exercise session, seniors were asked if they had had a fall. Realized were the objectives to build balance, stability and to perform activities of daily living (ADL), with other gains.

Seniors come from a variety of settings- 60 % from the general community and 40% from independent senior residential facilities, including low-income housing. To provide some context to the seniors' abilities, at the beginning of the project, half of the group needed some sort of assistance, such as dressing, undressing at the pool. However, at the end, they were able to dress themselves. The majority of participants were female; the sample had only 7 males. The average age for males was 83.6 years old and 76.7 for female participants. Overall, 39 seniors joined this program and from this same group, 31 seniors completed all components of the project's assessments.

This project contributed to seniors making behavioral changes in their lifestyles and has helped these seniors avoid nursing home placement. The 12 sessions of progressive aquatic exercises developed seniors' core strength and balance. Seniors embraced the exercise program, which utilized equipment such as bar bells and gyro joggers, but seniors also sang songs while exercising. They had fun, as class attendance was always high. The SAFPP prevented serious falls, by building balance and stability, thereby averting injury and/or disability. Seniors had improved ADLs. In follow up with seniors, 5 months after the completion of the project, there have been no falls requiring hospitalization; all seniors still performed some sort of exercise. By word of mouth advertising, there are over 100 seniors on the wait list to repeat this project.

The steering committee of the Falls' team for the Delaware Coalition for Injury Prevention received a Healthy People grant of \$5,000 in May 2007 and partnered with 14 other organizations. With financial and in-kind support, resources aimed to reduce barriers for

participation. Seniors were given free amenities: bathing suits; locker room shoes; transportation; towels, water bottles; nutritious snacks; reading materials on falls with informal teaching.

Through this group project, significantly, only 7 falls occurred and none required hospitalization. This was a savings up to \$500,000, direct and indirect costs (based on the literature review and DE fall statistics for hospitalized seniors). The cost per participant was \$333.00, due to our partnerships. Participants unanimously observed improvement in their strength and balance. As falls among the elderly are a noteworthy burden of injury in Delaware, this is an innovative and cost effective program which is viable and more importantly, wanted by seniors.

Lead partners included the Delaware Coalition for Injury Prevention (Office of EMS/Division of Public Health/Delaware Health & Social Services) Fall Prevention Team; Ingleside Homes, Inc., a 501(c) (3); Foulk Manor North, Five Star Quality Care Communities, (for profit facility); and the Delaware Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities. For more information, contact Peggy Mack, Ph.D. at 302. 427.0425 or by email at peggymack02@aol.com