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CONTINENCE PROMOTION IN A FALLS AND BALANCE CLINIC (POSTER)

Hypothesis / aims of study

To develop a pathway for the management of incontinence in an older adult population with high falls risks.

Falls in older adults are a major cause of injury, disability, nursing home admission and death. Continence issues such as overactive bladder syndrome (OAB), urgency and frequency and nocturia are often co-incident in older adult fallers. The hospital Falls and Balance Clinic, a tertiary, hospital-based clinic and the Community Outreach Assessment Program (COAP), a community-based secondary level assessment clinic identified a high prevalence of continence problems in falls clinic clients. Little research has to date been found on the relationship between continence issues and increased risk of falls. No identification of type of incontinence or existence of urgency, frequency or OAB without incontinence was possible/evident.

Study design, materials and methods

By adopting a model of close cooperation between the various levels of health care, aged care services and other community organisations, a pathway has been developed that provides identification, assessment, and management of continence issues in falls clinics clients.

The pathway put into place in the clinics will allow for the assessment and the treatment process to be assessed and measured. Changes in continence outcome measures will assist in the identification type of continence issues in this patient group and assess the level of risk that continence issues add to the total risk of falls in older adults.

Results

Twenty-eight percent of clients assessed at the falls clinics were identified to have symptomatic urinary incontinence.

Since the implementation of the continence pathway, 80 clients have consented to follow up which includes, continence assessment and management. Many lessons have been learnt along this journey of development and implementation with education and internal drivers being keys to success. Refinement of the program is ongoing with collective problem solving producing some innovative ideas within the Continence Promotion Centre.

Interpretation of results

Continence problems occur commonly in older adults attending falls clinics. Implementation of a pathway for continence management is feasible in the falls clinic setting.

Concluding message

Falls clinics provide an opportunity to identify older adults with continence issues. Through the continence pathway, early identification can result in early treatment of continence problems and reduction of the falls risk can be monitored.