



Member Program: A Matter of Balance

History:

A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls is a program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase the activity levels of older adults. It is based upon research conducted by the Roybal Center for Enhancement of Late-Life Function at Boston University. In October 2003, the Administration on Aging awarded three-year evidence-based disease prevention grants. Southern Maine Agency on Aging, MaineHealth's Partnership for Healthy Aging, Maine Medical Center Division of Geriatrics, and the University of Southern Maine School of Social Work received funding to translate A Matter of Balance into a train-the-trainer program that uses lay leaders instead of healthcare professionals as facilitators and would serve as an innovative national model for addressing fall prevention.

The vlay leader model utilizes trained lay leaders, called coaches, working under a Master Trainer, to conduct the class, which consists of eight two-hour sessions for groups of 10 to 12 participants. Because the A Matter of Balance Lay Leader Model reduces the cost of the intervention, the program can be offered more frequently and in a wider variety of settings, thereby reaching a significantly higher number of older adults.

Program Description:

A Matter of Balance is a community-based, small-group (8-12 participants) program that helps older adults reduce their fear of falling and increase activity levels. It is a train-the-trainer program with Master Trainers training Coaches (lay leaders). Coaches work in pairs to lead small group community classes which consist of eight two-hour sessions. The behavior change curriculum addresses the fear of falling and engages the participant to view falls and the fear of falling as controllable. Exercises are introduced and performed in 6 of the 8 sessions. Participants are involved in group discussion, problem-solving, skill-building, assertiveness training, sharing practical solutions, and exercise training. Developing an action plan to address ongoing exercise, reducing risk factors and changing behaviors that contribute to risk factors supports ongoing efforts to reduce the fear of falling in participants. A Matter of Balance was designed to benefit community-dwelling older adults who:

- Are concerned about falls
- Have sustained falls in the past
- Restrict activities because of concerns about falling
- Are interested in improving flexibility, balance and strength
- Are age 60 or older, ambulatory and able to problem solve

Program Outcomes:

Study results from the program study included:

- Increased falls efficacy,
- Falls management,
- Falls control,
- Exercise level,
- Decreased concern about falling interfering with Social Activities
- Decrease in self-reported falls.

A 2013 retrospective study by CMS (2) of evidence-based programs found:

- Cost reductions in unplanned hospitalization, skilled nursing and home health, and
- \$938 decrease in total annual medical costs.

Program References:

1. Healy, T.C., Peng, C., Haynes, P., McMahon, E., Botler, J., & Gross, L. (2008). The feasibility and effectiveness of translating A Matter of Balance into a volunteer lay leader model. Journal of Applied Gerontology, 27(1): 34-51.
2. Report to Congress: The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Evaluation of Community-Based Wellness and Prevention Programs under Section 4202 (b) of the Affordable Care Act, September 30, 2013

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