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AN EVALUATION OF BE STRONG: A NURSE-LED CAREGIVER-ASSISTED EXERCISE PROGRAM TO REDUCE FALL-RISK IN OLDER ADULTS

Statement of the Problem: One in three adults over age 65, fall each year sustaining an injury. Preventing falls is multifactorial inclusive of age, medical condition, comorbidity, medication use, vision, and environmental home safety factors; however a key variable to reduce falls with the aging population is exercise. Falls can be reduced with regular exercise; yet, confidence in balance and fear of falling can psychologically limit older adults from participating in mobility.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A program called *Be Strong*, created and developed by an interdisciplinary team, was a nurse-led caregiver-assisted exercise program for fall-risk older adults. It focused on teaching older adults at-risk for falls, innovative ways to successfully exercise at home. The team created a library of 10 minute videos consisting of sitting, laying and standing exercises enabling older adults an ability to visually model tailored innovative exercises with caregivers in a safe, guarded environment. This nurse-led caregiver-assisted exercise pilot project evaluated fall-risk reduction, confidence in balance and fear of falling. Nine participants engaged in 20 minutes of daily tailored caregiver-assisted exercise over a 20 week period. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Conclusion & Significance: The Berg Balance Scale and Timed Up and Go test showed statistically significant differences in fall-risk scores. The Activities-Specific Balance Confidence Scale, Fall Efficacy Scale and Fall Efficacy International Scale showed no statistically significant difference in confidence and fear of falling. The participants, agency staff and consultants evaluative survey which showed positive feedback of this exercise experience.

Recommendations: This program continues to be offered to older adults aimed to reduce fall-risk and improve functional ability, independence, healthy living and quality of life.

Biography

Cindy Gross has nursing experience for the past 40 years in various sectors of the healthcare industry including clinical practice, administration and academic environments. In working with population health, the focus has been on health and wellness for the aging adult to maximize independence and functional ability through exercise and balance.

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