

**Improving Fall Risk Assessment in Primary Care
Using an Evidence-Based Fall Prevention Protocol**

Ronald C. Gonzalez

Touro University, Nevada

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DNP Project Chair: Dr. Denise Zabriskie

DNP Project Team Member: Dr. Terry Bartmus

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Abstract

Falls are a leading contributor of morbidity and mortality in the elderly. Even patients that did not suffer an injury limit their daily activities due to a fear of falling. Falls can influence health, quality of life, and medical costs. Current practice recommendations call for assessments and interventions by health care providers to help prevent falls. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed an initiative called Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries (STEADI) to assist health care providers with implementing fall prevention programs into practice. A quality improvement project was developed to increase knowledge and performance of fall risk management by primary care providers and clinic staff. The designed fall risk management protocol utilized assessment and intervention recommendations adapted from the STEADI initiative. A paired-samples t-test determined that education on falls risk management resulted in a 20.4% improvement in knowledge from 74.9% to 95.3% ($t= 5.45$, $p=.001$) among $N=8$ participants. Patient records were reviewed post-project implementation, and the results show that there was a 100% assessment rate for the patients seen by participating providers during the project implementation period ($N=254$), with 52.8% of patients identified as an increased risk for falls ($N=134$). Patients identified as increased fall risk had the fall risk addressed by the provider 94% of the time. The outcomes indicate that the project was successful with increasing knowledge and increasing performance of fall risk management with elderly patients in the primary care clinic used for the project, and the findings support the possibility of sustainability and roll out to other primary care clinics in the medical group.

Keywords: fall prevention, fall risk management, primary care, elderly