Stepping On Prevents Falls in Older Adults

The Situation
Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury-related deaths among those aged 65 years and older. One-third of older adults in the United States fall each year. The consequences of falls are substantial. They include fractures, head injuries, soft-tissue injuries, loss of mobility, loss of independent living and death. These consequences impose a significant burden on the older adults, their caregivers, communities and our health care system.

Extension Response
The NDSU Extension Service, Minot Commission on Aging, Manor Care Health, Milton Young Towers and Henry Towers partnered to deliver the seven week Stepping On program in the Minot area. Each week, participants met to learn health concepts and to practice the aerobic and strength exercise. The Stepping On program is evidence-based and helps seniors gain better balance, strength and confidence. The program helps older adults prevent falls.

We had 10 participants in the first session and 12 in the second who regularly attended the weekly sessions. Data is based on N=19.

Impacts
Overall, participants showed a gain in knowledge, along with confidence, in all seven key areas of falls prevention. The results among participants include the following:
- 71% increase in the level of understanding regarding how vision can influence the ability to get around safely
- 37% increase in the level of understanding about the relationship between safe footwear and fall prevention
- 100% increase in participant level of knowledge about the importance of balance and strength exercises for preventing falls
- 58% increase in the knowledge level related to recognizing hazards in home environments
- 55% improvement in participant knowledge of how good bone health influences fall prevention
- 62% increase in their level of confidence in applying safe strategies in mobility situations
- 57% increase in the participant understanding of the relationship between medications and falls

Feedback
- You guys did a wonderful job. I look forward to the 1:1 meeting.
- I was able to get out of my wheelchair and start walking on my own!
- I gained confidence in walking.
- [The presenters] did a fine job and I will tell others about the program.
- I plan to exercise more to improve balance and strength.
- I enjoyed meeting the others in the class.

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