

Inviting Physical Therapists to join us in preventing older adult falls

Be a part of an active movement to reduce falls and fall related injuries and deaths in older adults. Physical Therapists can play a unique role and contribute to healthy and safe aging for clients, community members, neighbors and family and friends. The American Physical Therapy Association is a member of the National Falls Free© Initiative, joining over 70 national organizations and 38 states all working together to address this growing public health issue: www.ncoa.org/fallsfreeinitiative

Facts About Falls

- **Widespread:** Falls are the **leading** cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries for those 65 and over; as baby boomers join the ranks of 65+, injuries and deaths will escalate. The chances of falling and of being seriously injured in a fall increase with age. In 2009, the rate of fall injuries for adults 85 and older was almost four times that for adults 65 to 74.
- **Very Expensive: \$28.2 billion a year is spent annually** on treating older adults for the effects of falls: Fractures are both the most common and most costly type of nonfatal injuries:
 - Just over one third of nonfatal injuries are fractures, but they make up 61% of costs—or \$12 billion.
 - In a study of people age 72 and older, the average health care cost of a fall injury totaled \$19,440.
 - The average cost of a fall related hip fracture injury in 2006 was \$37,000.
- **Often Fatal:** Each year, over **20,000 older adults die** from falls. As an example, 90% of all hip fractures among older adults result from falls. The average hospital stay for a hip fracture is one week; 25% of those will need to stay in a nursing home for at least a year, with most of these significant costs typically paid by Medicaid. Within one year, up to 20% of hip fracture patients will die.
- **Prevention is Cost Effective:** In a soon to be published CDC study, costs and benefits of program delivery were calculated. Evidence-based fall prevention programs offer promising directions for simple, cost-effective interventions through eliminating known risk factors, offering treatments that promote behavior change, and leveraging community networks to link clinical treatment and social services. Integrated models linking the clinical intervention with community programs and services are being piloted and show promise. Randomized controlled trials of several community based programs have clearly demonstrated a reduction in falls: When compared with controls, the risk of falling in the tai chi intervention participants was decreased 55 % and the Stepping on Program reduction was 30%. The *Matter of Balance* program has been shown through two randomized trials to accomplish its primary objective, which is to increase falls self-efficacy (i.e., perceived self-efficacy or confidence at avoiding falls during essential, nonhazardous activities of daily living). In the most recent study, by self report there were significantly fewer recurrent fallers in the intervention group.

Did you know that Physical Therapists and Assistants are being trained to offer or participate in community programs? Physical therapists will link their older adult patients to community programs as part of their care plan. Physical therapists are an integral part of the Stepping On program by serving as a guest expert for 3 out of 7 sessions. Physical therapists are part of many effective clinical multifactorial fall prevention programs, for example, the Yale FICSIT program, PROFET, and the Winchester Falls Project. Another effective falls prevention program that can be delivered alone or as part of a multifactorial program is the Otago Exercise Program.

The Otago Exercise Program is now ready for delivery in the home by physical therapists. APTA is joining with CDC in offering certification:

1. The Otago Exercise Program (OEP) has proven to effectively reduce falls by 35% when delivered to clients 80 years of age and older.
2. Integrating the OEP into your PT practice will result in better outcomes and fewer falls. Local physicians will be educated in this program and will be looking to refer patients to practices which offer this program.
3. The Otago Exercise Program is classified as an evidence-based falls prevention program. You can highlight this program in your marketing materials to increase your referral base.
4. Home Health Agencies are required by Medicare to have a falls prevention program, and the Otago Exercise Program is an accepted program, so agencies do not have to spend time re-inventing the wheel.
5. Outpatient physical therapists can use the Otago Exercise Program as a falls prevention intervention and receive reimbursement through Medicare's quality improvement initiative (PQRI)
6. Therapists will receive free training in how to implement and sustain the OEP.
7. Opportunity to participate in a national project, receive free advertising through national organizations (the Centers for Disease Control, the American Physical Therapy Association, etc.)

The American Physical Therapy Association is working hard to bring educational tools and resources to its members including continuing education opportunities and exciting articles highlighting the role of Physical Therapists and new community program opportunities. These are available on www.APTA.org; additional opportunities will be offered in the annual conferences. In addition to championing the role of therapists in fall prevention, APTA is also working to promote reimbursement for services in all venues.

Did you know we have an active Oregon Senior Falls Prevention Program working with national partners to bring greater awareness and resources to this growing public health issue in our own state? Join us in this important collaborative effort - see what other states are doing: www.ncoa.org/fallsmap

Otago training is an online, self-paced course that is FREE to Oregon physical therapists! For details about Otago, Stepping On, or Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance, contact Lisa Shields, falls prevention coordinator for the Oregon Health Authority, at lisa.m.shields@state.or.us

For information regarding *Matter of Balance* trainings, contact Kayt Zundel, ThinkFirst program director at Oregon Health & Science University, at zundel@ohsu.edu .

Did you know we participated in the Annual Falls Prevention Awareness Day in 2012, 2013, and will again in 2014? Learn how you can be involved. Join this important collaborative effort by contacting Lisa Shields today!

Oregon Senior Falls Prevention Program: healthoregon.org/fallprevention