FALLING FOR PREVENTION

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THE FALL FACTS

One out of four older people fall each year in the U.S., a staggering 37 million falls annually, leading to more than 4.5 million visits to emergency departments[1]. Falling once doubles the chance of falling again. One out of five of these falls causes a serious injury, including head trauma and hip and femur fractures[2].

While there are many evidence-based programs for seniors that are proven to reduce the chance of falling, such as Stand Up for Your Health and A Matter of Balance, none of these programs address fall prevention at the bedside for hospitalized patients who have been injured in a fall.

The American College of Surgeons requires all trauma centers have an injury prevention specialist who prioritizes programs based on trends reflected in the trauma registry and local epidemiological data.

At Saint Francis Hospital, a level 1 trauma center, the number one mechanism of injury is falling, outnumbering all other traumas combined. This holds true for many other trauma centers nationwide. More education through injury prevention should begin at the bedside and be highlighted in discharged instructions with follow-up support offered to patients who have fallen.



TEACHING IN THE COMMUNITY

We have teamed up with our pharmacy and PT/OT departments to bring a falls prevention class to senior centers and adult living complexes, where we teach the elderly about preventing falls through knowing their medications, exercises and safely getting up from bed or a chair. The 90-minute course has good participation rates, and we are often asked to come back to senior centers every year. In the photo below, one of our physical therapists is demonstrating to the group how to safely get up after falling.



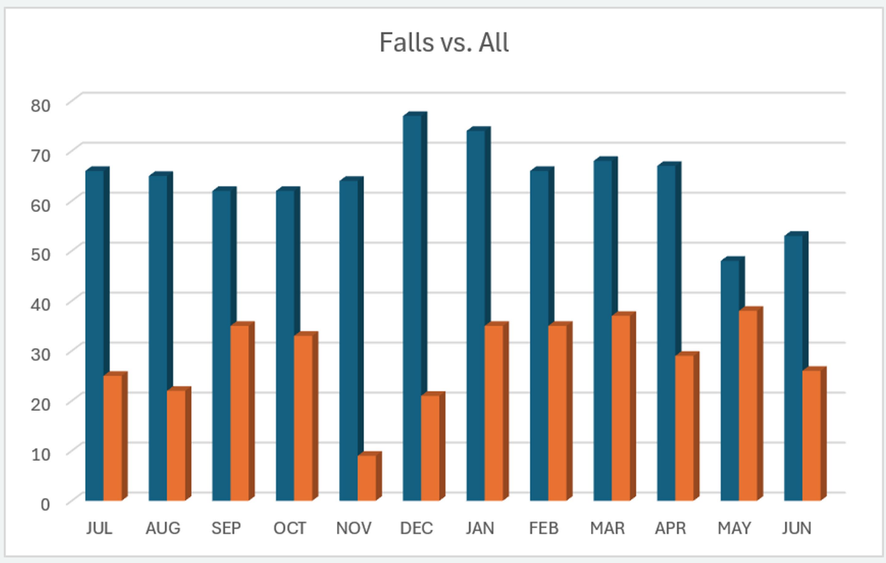
A MATTER OF BALANCE

MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

A MATTER OF BALANCE

A Matter of Balance is designed for older adults to make small changes at home and to reduce fall risk at home by exercising for balance and coordination. Participants take eight classes to learn how to improve balance, exercise and gain confidence to prevent falling at home.

Our first class was taught in East Windsor in August. We are pairing with the North End senior center in Hartford to teach community members to become coaches so they can regularly hold A Matter of Balance classes. We are always looking for more coaches.



WE CAN DO MORE

- Nurses can lead initiatives to prevent patients from falling again after they have been hospitalized for a fall.
- Patient education of hospitalized patients is crucial to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to reduce the risk of falling
- Teaching safe practices, such as proper and compliant use of assistive devices and safe movement techniques, can prevent subsequent falls[3].

SMALL STEPS TO MAKE CHANGE

- Nationwide, Trinity hospitals have formed an injury prevention group which meets monthly to discuss programs and ideas for risk reduction.
- The group is working to create a uniform, detailed discharge instruction in Epic for patients who are hospitalized for falls. Through the group's collaboration, a wide gap in patient education was discovered - many hospitals, often have no specific fall prevention discharge instructions for patients who have been admitted for injuries due to falling, even though they are at higher risk to fall again. The instructions would give patients, and their families detailed information to prevent falling once they are home, as well as links to injury prevention and to outpatient programs, such as A Matter of Balance and home safety programs. Virtual and bedside nurses would be able to use this vital discharge information to educate patients prior to leaving the hospital.
- At Saint Francis Hospital, Tracy Fox, RN, from injury prevention began a pilot program, rounding on trauma patients, including those who have been hospitalized after falling. The patients are given materials to take home, including a check list to look for potential fall risks at home, and education on high-risk medications. The patients will be tracked over the course of a year to see whether they fell again and whether early bedside education helped to teach them better safety at home.