

Stand Up Right - Stay Upright!

Building falls prevention capacity through
workforce development



Project Information Sheet 4 - December 2004

Stand Up Right – Stay Upright! Progress Update

Stand Up Right – Stay Upright! has moved into a second phase following a further one year of funding by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The project will now continue until May 2005.

Building on from the success of Phase 1, which concluded in May 2004, the second phase of the project is focussed on further developing the use of a falls risk assessment tool within general practice.

In conjunction with the North West Tasmania Division of General Practice, a number of north west Tasmanian general practices were approached to participate in the project. Seven practices in the region have been provided with *QuickScreen*[®], a tool developed by Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute. The tool provides a quick and comprehensive assessment of eight important falls risk factors and is being implemented in conjunction with the Enhanced Primary Care annual Health Assessment protocol for clients 75 or more years of age.

In identifying the presence of risk factors, the tool further highlights the risk increase for clients when multiple risk factors present. To assist medical practices in managing clients with an identified fall risk factor *Stand Up Right – Stay Upright!* is developing a range of resources including referral options and a series of clinical fact sheets.

This second phase of the project has also seen a change in the management structure with the creation of a Reference Group to replace the previous management group. The reference group is made up of representatives from a number of organisations including:

- Department of Health and Human Services
- NW Tasmania Division of GP
- Commonwealth Carelink
- Department of Health and Ageing
- Pharmaceutical Society
- Consumer Representative
- University Department of Rural Health.

The group meets quarterly and is responsible for providing timely policy advice and guidance throughout the delivery of the project and as an avenue for information dissemination.

Phase 1 Evaluation

At the completion of Phase 1 of the project an extensive evaluation report was prepared detailing the project outcomes and processes. The report 'Falls Prevention: Changing practice and building capacity' is available in PDF format accessed via the following website address.

<http://www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/falls/publications.htm>

For a hard copy of the report please contact the Principal Project Officer on (03) 6324 4020 or email Maree.Fish@utas.edu.au.

Conference Presentations

7th Australian Injury Prevention Conference – Safe living on the edge

In September 2004, *Stand Up Right – Stay Upright!* presented a paper at the 7th Australian Injury Prevention Conference held in Mackay, Queensland. The paper entitled 'The role of injury prevention in hospital emergency departments' reported on the outcomes of the Department of Emergency Medicine (DEM) workforce development initiative conducted in southern Tasmania during Phase 1 of the project.

A key recommendation from the initiative was the need for a discharge care co-ordinator position within the DEM to improve the discharge process of older patients, assist in linking such patients with community services and enable follow-up management via phone within 24 hours of discharge.

Stand Up Right – Stay Upright! also highlighted seven key alert factors developed as important indicators of potential post-discharge difficulties for older patients.

1. Aged over 65 and frail.
2. The injury significantly affects the patient's ability to function, e.g. is the dominant hand or leg.
3. A level of pain that interferes with mobility and self-care, e.g. chest wall pain, back pain and bruising.
4. Pre-injury level of function, i.e. the injury may have tipped patient into acopia.
5. Patients experiencing strong pain that does not match the level of injury.
6. Living arrangements unsuited to their loss of function, e.g. physical environment such as stairs, no carer in the household, or lack of other existing services.
7. Social isolation, i.e. capacity of relatives and friends to help out, who will go to the pharmacy, shop, take them to the GP?

Australian Falls Prevention Inaugural Conference – From research to practice

The inaugural Australian Falls Prevention Conference held in Manly in late November 2004 attracted over 400 delegates from Australia, New Zealand and overseas. *Stand Up Right – Stay Upright!* presented a poster entitled 'Introducing falls risk assessment into GP practices' based on the implementation of a falls risk assessment tool into General Practice in northern Tasmania during Phase 1 of the project.

Four general practices in northern Tasmania were provided with *QuickScreen*[®], a falls risk assessment tool developed by Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute. Practices linked the tool with the Enhanced Primary Care annual Health Assessment available to patients 75 or more years of age. The tool uses eight measures to assess for specific fall related risk. A total of 111 patients were assessed using the tool with a mean total risk factor of three (see Figure 1). The tool provides a quick reference indicating the total risk increase as the number of risk factors present increases (see Table 1). Most patients assessed using the tool had a significantly increased risk of falling.

Figure 1: What the tool found

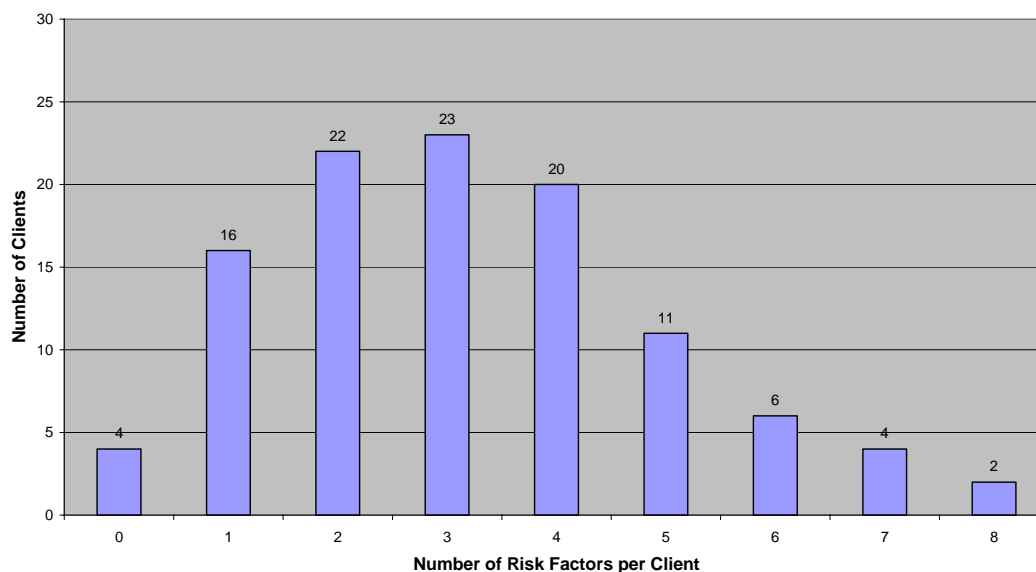


Table 1: Total Risk Increase
(QuickScreen© Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute)

Number of risk factors	0	1	2	3	4	5+
Total risk increase	1	1.4	2.1	4.7	8.7	12

The three risk factors present in more than half the patients assessed were: taking four or more medications; failing the near tandem step test (indicating poor lateral stability affecting balance), and poor low contrast vision (creating poor night vision and difficulty identifying changes in floor levels). Table 2 indicates the number (and percentage) of patients with each risk factor present.

Table 2: Presence of risk factors for clients ≥ 75 years

Risk Factor Present	Number of Clients
Four or more medications (exc. Vitamins)	70 (63%)
Near tandem stand test	65 (59%)
Low contrast visual acuity test	58 (52%)
Tactile sensitivity test	41 (37%)
One or more falls in previous year	37 (33%)
Sit to stand test	33 (30%)
Alternate step test	26 (23%)
Any psychotropic medications	16 (14%)
n=111	

For further information about *Stand Up Right – Stay Upright!* contact ...

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