

FINAL REPORT to HEALTH CANADA and VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA
FALLS PREVENTION INITIATIVE
On the activities of the
***WATCH YOUR STEP!* PROJECT**
Sponsored by the 411 Seniors Centre

April 30, 2004
Vancouver, BC

1. Project Accomplishments

PROJECT GOAL:

To facilitate change in attitudes about falls prevention and change in personal health practices to reduce fall risks in community-dwelling seniors and veterans.

Objective 1:

To increase the capacity of active seniors, veterans and caregivers to make informed decisions and choices in order to prevent falls.

Objective 2:

To raise the awareness of volunteer counsellors around fall risks, and to work with them to develop strategies to assist their clients in assessing and managing personal risk factors.

Objective 3:

To raise public awareness about the seriousness of falls, risk factors for falls, and prevention of falls in the community, in support of Objectives 1 and 2.

What has been achieved

Successes:

- The formation of new partnerships and strengthening of existing relationships among organizations serving seniors, veterans and the general community.
- The connections established with the Punjabi and Chinese communities.
- The outstanding commitment of the members of the coordinating committee over both phases of the project.
- The recruitment, training and retention of highly skilled and dedicated workshop volunteers.
- The usefulness of the interactive falls prevention workshops, as evidenced by the ever-increasing demand from community groups.
- The usefulness of workshops and presentations for professionals, students and other audiences, as evidenced by volume of requests.
- The growing awareness in the Lower Mainland area around fall prevention. The project cannot take credit for all of this, but our work was certainly an important factor.
- The knowledge gained about providing appropriately delivered services to non-English speaking seniors.

Challenges:

- Finding enough bilingual, bicultural volunteers to serve the demand of Punjabi seniors for information on falls prevention.
- Engaging a larger number of local veterans' organizations in the work.
- Securing specific funding for continuation of the work after the end of the project period.

Tools and Resources

- Curriculum and materials for participatory awareness and education workshops in three languages – English, Punjabi and Chinese.
- Curriculum and materials for counsellors' workshops.
- Curriculum and materials for training peer volunteer workshop facilitators.
- Poster presentation on why and how the project targeted non-English speaking seniors.
- Colour poster targeting active seniors with the message "Don't let a fall spoil your game".
- A "how to" manual, *Designing and Implementing a Falls Prevention Program for Older Adults*.

All materials are available on the 411 Seniors Centre website, www.411seniors.bc.ca

2. Project Work Plan

Strategy for Objective 1: Peer to peer group education for active seniors and veterans.

Curriculum:

- Development of curriculum and materials for participatory awareness and education workshops.
- Adaptation of curriculum and materials for presentation to Punjabi and Chinese seniors.

Peer volunteers:

- Development of curriculum and materials for training volunteer workshop facilitators
- Recruitment, training and support of 23 volunteers (Two rounds, 14 active volunteers at Project completion)

Education and awareness workshops:

- The goal was to deliver three presentations each to 30 groups of seniors. Total workshop series presented were 48. An additional four specially adapted single session workshops were delivered. 1,083 seniors and veterans participated.

Strategy for Objective 2: Professional and volunteer education and awareness. In order to get falls prevention information to isolated individuals in the most time- and resource-efficient manner, the project will link with those who are already talking with them one-to-one.

- Development of curriculum and materials for 90-minute workshop.

- Workshops delivered to four groups, including senior peer counsellors, information and referral counsellors, veterans' services officers and adult day centre staff.

Strategy for Objective 3: Develop a public awareness campaign in support of the direct-contact education activities.

- Development and implementation of a communications plan. (Please see appendices)
- Newspaper articles in English, Japanese and Chinese. Newsletter articles. Radio and television interviews in English and Cantonese.
- Three annual Falls Prevention Fairs were held, including the first one done in the bridge period.
- Project staff and volunteers participated in eight health, senior and community fairs hosted by other organizations, providing information to approximately 5,860 people.
- Project staff and coordinating committee members gave four conference presentations.
- Project staff gave 11 workshops and special presentations for health care professionals, building managers, students in geriatric recreation certification programs, retirees' associations, etc.

Activities in the last quarter

- In partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and the Roundhouse Community Centre, the project hosted the third annual Fall and Injury Prevention Fair on February 12, 2004.
- Presentations for North Shore seniors' housing building managers (February 17) and North Shore occupational therapists (March 24).
- Completion of project "how to" manual.
- Project wrap event.

What has worked well

- Recruitment, training, retention and support of volunteers.
 - It worked because the project hired a very knowledgeable and experienced coordinator of volunteers.
 - The budget was adjusted in order to free up sufficient funds to retain the coordinator (with reduced hours) throughout the second year.
- Interactive workshops.
 - The development of workshop curriculum and materials was based on information from community focus groups with seniors, veterans and caregivers, thereby ensuring that the information was what seniors needed, and was presented in ways they were comfortable with.
 - The exercise component of the workshops, the "Kitchen Sink Strength and Balance Exercises" was a hit with participants in all

venues. Use of the exercises has spread to other falls prevention projects, physiotherapists, and Yoga classes for seniors.

What did not work

- Finding a celebrity spokesperson.
 - Many suggestions of suitable candidates were made, but no-one had connections and the project was unable to secure anything other than good wishes for continued success from the people contacted.

What could be done differently

The Project met, and in some instances exceeded, its goals and objectives. The only thing we would like to do differently would be to carry on the work.

Dissemination plan

- A summary report will be distributed to all organizations that have supported the project in various ways over the past three years. (Please see Mailing List in Appendices)
- The entire report will be distributed to project partners and other BC falls projects, and will be available for other interested parties.
- The “how-to” document and all materials are available for down-loading at: www.411seniors.bc.ca

3. PARTNERSHIPS

Project partners were:

- City of Vancouver Social Planning Department
- Communications & Public Affairs, Vancouver / Coastal Health Authority
- Evergreen Community Health Centre, Vancouver / Coastal Health Authority
- Multicultural Health Education Program, Vancouver / Coastal Health Authority
- The Poppy Fund
- Royal Canadian Legion Branch #16
- Royal Canadian Legion Branch #48
- Royal Canadian Legion, BC / Yukon Command
- Seniors Population Health Advisory Committee, Vancouver / Coastal Health Authority
- Seniors Well Aware Program
- Special Needs & Seniors’ Programs, Vancouver Park Board
- Three Bridges Community Health Centre, Vancouver / Coastal Health Authority

These partners provide staff time for consultation and participation in the direction of the Project. Partners contributed approximately 600 hours of work on the Coordinating Committee and on the Communications, Curriculum, Hiring and Fair subcommittees. An additional 150 hours were contributed to community events, the annual Fall and Injury Prevention Fair, and assistance with arranging for and delivering workshops.

4. SENIOR AND VETERAN INVOLVEMENT

- Coordinating Committee participants include four veterans, two of whom are seniors, another senior volunteer, and a volunteer who cares for her father. Two volunteers are from the business sector, donating their personal time. In addition to their contributions to the Coordinating Committee and various subcommittees, participants collaborate in conference presentations and represent the project at community events.
- Of the 23 workshop volunteers active during the project term, the majority are over 50. Workshop volunteers have donated approximately 800 hours, including training, practise and workshop sessions, representing the Project at community events, translation, and participation in the Fall and Injury Prevention Fair.

5. PROJECT EVALUATION

*"Many of the things you can count, don't count.
Many of the things you can't count, really count."*

Albert Einstein

- A random sample of the workshop volunteers were interviewed as part of the evaluation.
- The evaluation findings will be used to inform the design of future projects in the sponsoring organization.

Please see the attached Evaluation Report.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

After funding ends

No further funding has been secured to maintain the project in its present form, however some of the methods, materials and learnings will be used in other projects sponsored by 411 Seniors Centre, and in fall prevention programs now being developed in other parts of the Lower Mainland.

Discussions are underway with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority personnel responsible for developing falls prevention programs in Richmond and in North Vancouver. Personnel assigned to do falls prevention in South Surrey/White Rock are also interested in the project's work. Methods, curricula and materials developed by *Watch Your Step* will be available for use in these areas.

There was no plan to make the project into a fee-for-service enterprise, however in order to try to accommodate continuing requests for workshops, we have calculated our cost and are quoting a price of \$75 per series of two. This covers staff time for arranging the workshop, mileage for volunteers, photocopying and postage. As of April 28, a series has been scheduled in Mandarin for a large group of Taiwanese seniors, and another series is being arranged with a private seniors' residence.

The Multicultural Health Outreach project sponsored by 411 Seniors Centre and funded by the Canadian Volunteer Initiative will complete its initial seven-month research phase on April 30, 2004. Applications to CVI and Heritage Canada for joint funding of the implementation phase are now in process. This project builds on the work done by *Watch Your Step* in the Chinese and Punjabi communities, expanding the concept of senior peer volunteers providing preventative health information, including falls prevention, to others within their ethno-linguistic group. In addition to Chinese and Punjabi seniors, the Multicultural Health Outreach project works with the Spanish-speaking, Korean and Filipino communities. The Multicultural Health Education Office of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority is a partner in both phases of this project.

Priorities for future action

The demand for workshops with community-dwelling seniors and veterans, with staff and peer volunteers, with professional certification programs in geriatric recreation and fitness, with managers of seniors housing, and with health care professionals continues to be very strong. Venues where workshops were held a year ago are now requesting a second series. More than a thousand seniors participated in workshops, and several thousand more received information on falls prevention at health and senior fairs. This is only a small fraction of the senior population in the area. Approximately 242,485 people over the age of 65 live in the City of Vancouver, and tens of thousands more in the Lower Mainland (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census data). In the short time the project has been operating, we have seen an increase in awareness of fall risks and fall prevention, but there is much more to be done.

Project strength

The project provided a rallying point for a number of dedicated people who were working on fall prevention in relative isolation. Their combined enthusiasm and expertise has been the driving force behind the project's success. The key was having a funded position to coordinate the effort. The network of people at the various levels of involvement in project support continues to expand. Beyond the core formed by the coordinating committee and the workshop volunteers, there is a spectrum of experts who contribute as necessary, including city engineers, fitness instructors, nutritionists, medical equipment suppliers, Park Board staff, etc..

7. SUPPORT FROM HEALTH CANADA AND VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

The level of support from Health Canada and Veterans Affairs staff has been outstanding. Both the project officers and other staff who arranged meetings, reimbursements and other amenities were unfailingly helpful and supportive. Staff were accessible and approachable throughout the project period, ready to answer questions, discuss problems, and provide advice.

The evaluation training would have been even more helpful if it could have been scheduled earlier in the process.

The two most beneficial points about the funding program were 1) the Phase I funding, which provided essential time to do research and project design, leading to a well-planned

implementation phase, and 2) the bridge funding, which assured that we could keep the momentum going and keep everyone on board for the Phase III launch.

8. MEDIA ACTIVITY

The decision by the Deputy Provincial Health Officer to hold the January 2004 launch for the *Report on Falls Prevention for Older Adults* at our location led to broad media coverage for the project in addition to the report. Workshop volunteers and participants gave interviews for English, French and Chinese television, and for Chinese and English newspapers. CTV's Dr. Rhonda Low featured "Watch Your Step", and also the SAFER housing project. A complete list of media articles may be found in the Evaluation Report.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT

Attached

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Seeds of another partnership arising from the project have been sown: the president of the Taiwanese seniors' group has become a member of the 411 Seniors Centre and is encouraging other members of his group to participate in activities offered here.