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Exploring Home Safety Interests Among Older Adults at Risk for Falls: Insights from a Fall Prevention Trial

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Keywords

Fall prevention, Motivational interviewing, Home design, Older adults, Primary care

Abstract

Background

A safe home environment (the indoor and outdoor spaces of a person's home) is essential for older adults at increased risk for falling. In this population, environmental modifications can reduce falls by 26%. However, little is understood about how older adults at increased fall risk engage with home safety.

Objectives

Using data from a feasibility trial of motivational interviewing (MI) to engage older adults (aged ≥ 65 and at increased risk for falling) in fall prevention, describe the frequency and characteristics of 1) home safety recommendations from primary care providers and 2) home safety topics discussed during the trial's MI intervention sessions.

Methods

Recruitment for the parent study occurred from September 2020 through September 2022 at OHSU's Internal Medicine and Geriatrics Clinic. Out of 101 participants randomly assigned to the MI intervention, 87 completed at least one of eight study MI sessions. In this secondary analysis, three researchers independently categorized fall prevention recommendations from clinic notes and MI sessions and calculated frequencies per study protocol.

Results

Only 5 participants (6%) received home safety recommendations (e.g., referral for in-home safety evaluation or home safety brochures) from primary care clinicians. However, 40 participants (46%) discussed home safety in 100 of the 282 MI sessions. Topics included

using home design features such as grab bars and railings (66 sessions), clearing floorspace (33 sessions), stairs/elevators (19 sessions), and lighting/brightness (16 sessions).

Conclusions

When provided with supportive opportunities to discuss fall prevention during study MI sessions, nearly half of participants shared their thoughts about home design. In contrast, just 6% received home design recommendations from their primary care providers, highlighting an important gap in care. Further research is needed to clarify how older adults engage in home safety and identify opportunities for intervention.