

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injury among adults. The annual medical costs from falls in adults over the age of 65 account for nearly \$80 billion, yet prevention efforts remain low. With almost 25% of Cincinnati residents living in poverty as of 2023, falls are a detrimental financial burden to patients all over the tri-state area, some of whom may never be able to recover. This advocacy project aims to address individuals' environments and neighborhoods to decrease the incidence of falls in the elderly population of Cincinnati through supporting educational community workshops.

Research has shown that participation in fall prevention training programs can significantly reduce the rate of falls among older adults and decrease their self-perceived risk of falls. Our learning community assessed a local Cincinnati community-based fall prevention program with our partner organization, People Working Cooperatively. After digitizing survey data into REDCap and conducting a retrospective analysis, we found functional performance improved significantly with an average number of chair stands increasing by 2.66 repetitions for each participant. In addition, we found that fall incidence was reduced after program completion. Participants experienced 0.48 fewer falls in the 4-week interval. Given these results, it is recommended as an effective intervention for older adults in the community.

Fall prevention is a crucial component of community safety, especially for the elderly population. Not only do falls deteriorate physical health, but also mental well-being. Without proper awareness and safe home environments, elderly individuals may feel increasingly fearful as they accumulate experiences with falls and subsequent injuries. As people become more fearful, they are at increased risk for morbidity associated with mental health. They may limit their mobility within and outside the home, potentially reducing their social support network and leading to isolation.

With community programs aimed at improving awareness for fall prevention, individuals can be supported in their efforts to make their homes safer while improving their quality of life. These training programs have the potential to increase feelings of social connection for elderly populations who are often isolated. As a result, the larger community would benefit from increased resilience and support networks.

Current publicly available information shows that fall prevention programs in Cincinnati and the surrounding area are primarily funded by state grants. While these have been impactful for the Greater Cincinnati Area, there is still a large need for expanded access to these programs. We propose that the City of Cincinnati allocate dedicated funding to support free and easily accessible fall prevention classes for its residents. Importantly, these programs would be most impactful if offered close to home, such as at recreation centers or YMCAs.

Data from the National Health Interview Survey shows that people in poverty are more likely to have fall-related injuries than those who are not in poverty. Since almost a quarter of Cincinnatians live in poverty, a large portion of the city's inhabitants are at a higher risk of fall-related injuries and could benefit from free and easily accessible community-based fall prevention programs. Therefore, by implementing city-funded fall prevention programs, the city would decrease the medical costs associated with falls and, more importantly, help protect its citizens from injury.

References

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