COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION OF THE OTAGO EXERCISE PROGRAMME DELIVERED BY PHYSIOTHERAPY STUDENTS FOR OLDER ADULTS AT RISK OF FALLS

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Introduction

Population ageing increases the demand for effective fall prevention strategies, creating opportunities for innovative university–community partnerships that simultaneously promote healthy ageing and physiotherapy workforce development.

Demographic challenge → Educational challenge → Healthcare challenge

Objective: to evaluate the feasibility of a university-community fall prevention model by undergraduated Physiotherapy students.

Method

Intervention

STEP-UP-OTAGO Student Training Elderly in Prevention–Upgraded Otago

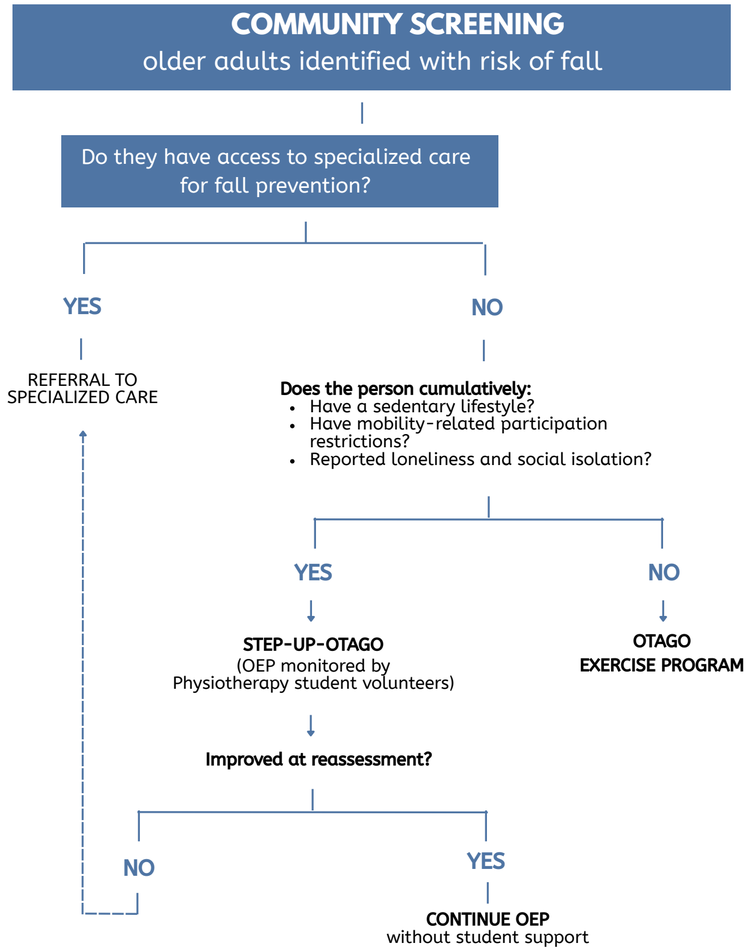
- is a university–community programme in which volunteer physiotherapy students deliver a supervised, adaptation of Otago Exercise Programme to older adults at risk of falls living within their local community;
- promotes healthy ageing while enhancing students geriatric care competencies, fostering intergenerational relationships and contributing to the reduction of ageist attitudes.

Study design

- In-classes training followed by implementation of STEP-UP-OTAGO over 12 weeks - 3 groups (2 students + 1 older adult, each) at person's home;
- Quantitative and qualitative data collected from the participants and potentially community stakeholders;
- Analysis according to the Eight Feasibility Domains (Bowen et al., 2009).

Results

- **STEP-UP-OTAGO** demonstrated high acceptability among older adults and students, with all participants reporting positive experiences and willingness to recommend the programme;
- Implementation was achieved: with good adherence (83/108 planned sessions completed (76.8%),and no programme-related adverse events.
- Stakeholders identified opportunities for integration within physiotherapy undergraduated programmes, healthcare and community settings, supporting future expansion;
- Preliminary efficacy findings suggested improvements in exercise self-efficacy, walking confidence and mobility related participation.



Conclusion

Findings support the potential integration of STEP-UP-OTAGO in physiotherapy education and community health initiatives;

Although, future large-scale studies should evaluate effectiveness, long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness, while exploring the programme's broader impact on social connectedness, loneliness and intergenerational engagement.