

# **Rural Pilot Falls Prevention Program**

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**Background:** Falls in the community presents a significant issue with approximately 30% of people over the age of 65 years having a fall each year (Gillespie et al., 2012). Allied Health professionals at Rochester and Elmore District Health Service (REDHS), in rural Victoria, have identified a need to respond to an increase demand for management of falls, particularly in the elderly. Through a needs analysis and evidence review, REDHS have identified a group-based model of care to address falls and promote a falls prevention approach, for clients residing in local community.

**Method:** A multi-disciplinary team (including a pharmacist, podiatrist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and dietitian) was engaged to plan, implement and evaluate a group based falls prevention program. An evidence review was conducted to develop the program, ensuring it incorporated current best practice. Seven community members were recruited for the pilot program via local media, general practitioners and health professionals referrals. The program was implemented over six weeks and consisted of one hour of falls prevention education and one hour of exercise.

**Results:** Evaluation of the program identified participants had increased their confidence in daily activities, made positive changes to reduce the risk of falls, and had improved outcomes in mobility and balance. Qualitative survey results during and at the end of the program indicated participants responded positively to the information presented by health professionals, were able to make behaviour changes to reduce the risk of falling.

**Discussion:** Evaluation results show early indications that the program was successful, through education and exercise, in reducing the risk of falls for participants. REDHS Allied Health team have acknowledged the need for the multidisciplinary falls prevention program to be embedded as a model of care to meet the needs of the community, and are exploring options to provide an outreach program to surrounding rural towns.