

Integrate Fall Prevention Processes into Your Practice: Tops Tips from Other GPs and Practice Nurses

Before integrating iSOLVE fall prevention processes within your practice, learn from the experiences of others. Here are some useful tips from other GPs and practice nurses.

Think outside the disease box

- Trained doctors can sometimes find it difficult to think outside the disease box. Having a fall is not a disease, but falls can cause significant injuries and even deaths. It is important to think outside the disease box in order to keep your patients healthy, active and on their feet.

Be proactive in thinking and asking about falls

- Ask patients aged 65 years and over about falls. Some of them will have had falls or know someone who has. Some will have had near misses. Delve a bit deeper. They may have more interest in preventing falls than you think.
- Ask about falls as often as you can. If you're doing a GP Management Plan e.g. for ischaemic heart disease, add in, 'Have you had a fall?'. If a patient comes in for dressings on a small leg wound, don't just leave it at 'oh, I had a stumble.' Say, 'How do you feel about going off to do a program to reduce the risk of falling?' and be aware of what options are available.

Observe your patients with falls in mind

- Keep an eye on patients walking in from the waiting room. Paying attention to how patients walk to your consultation room can tell you a lot about how unsteady patients are on their feet.
- Another observation idea from a GP: "I went to weigh one of my patients and as she got on, I knew she needed me to help her to stay balanced on the scale, so you know, even though she's healthy, she's still at risk of falls."

Plan appointments

- You might not be able to complete everything in the decision tool in one go. Run through the Stay Independent checklist first. That might be all you can do in the first consultation.
- Say to your patient, "We need to schedule a longer appointment to help prevent falls and keep you active". Get them to come back for a double appointment where you discuss the issues and, if needed, make a care plan. Let the reception staff know to schedule in a longer appointment.

Practice nurses have an important role in fall prevention

A practice nurse can:

- Identify, recruit and send out recall letters to people at risk of falls or who are fearful of falling.
- Talk about fall prevention with at-risk patients e.g. during immunisation, wound care, 75+ health assessment, GP management plan.
- Go through some of the fall prevention resources with patients.
- Arrange appointments with patients specifically to go through their *Patient Stay Independent Checklist*.
- Liaise with a GP regarding follow-up with patient progress.

Address the issue of affordability

- Provide options to address affordability, whilst emphasising the importance of fall prevention
- If your patient has private health insurance then fall prevention activities are not going to cost them much and they feel like they're using their insurance.
- Some patients might prefer to do their own exercises at home (following exercises in resources or specifically designed by a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist) which saves them service and transport costs.
- Some patients might prefer to pay to attend classes which also come with the social element. Other patients might prefer, or require, one-on-one consultation e.g. with a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist.

Use relevant MBS item numbers

- Familiarise yourself with relevant MBS item numbers that can be used for fall prevention.

Use the iSOLVE resources

- Bookmark the GP Fall Risk Assessment tool www.fallspreventiononlineworkshops.com.au/tool in your web browser to use with your patients.
- There are also lots of resources available online to help you implement fall prevention in your practice: www.fallspreventiononlineworkshops.com.au/resources/
- Have booklets and brochures available in the waiting room so people can help themselves and/or give them to the practice nurse or staff to hand out to patients where relevant.
- We have also partnered up with other organisations like MedicalDirector and HotDoc to integrate fall prevention within the GP computer systems.