

Day Hospice Falls Prevention Programme at Northern Ireland Hospice

Gillian Walker, an Occupational Therapist at Northern Ireland Hospice, Belfast, was the proud winner of the Cosyfeet OT Award 2017. The £1000 award helped fund the OT department's pioneering project to increase falls awareness among Day Hospice patients, and among the carers who assist them. Here she reports on the project.

Having received an award of £1000 from Cosyfeet, the Northern Ireland Hospice OT department commenced delivery of a falls prevention programme in September 2017. The aim of the project was to increase falls awareness, primarily among patients but also among families, carers, volunteers and staff.

Day Hospice is an invaluable service offered by NI Hospice, providing multidisciplinary intervention and a therapeutic programme to patients with life limiting conditions, including cancer, COPD, MND and dementia, to name a few. Many of our patients are at an increased risk of falls due to their conditions, symptoms, medications and co morbidities and often are referred to Day Hospice having received no falls prevention education.

Day Hospice offers a service three days a week, with patients typically attending once weekly. Therefore, it was decided to hold three sessions over a one week period to accommodate all attending patients.

Over the course of the week, the sessions are delivered to patients through an interactive and engaging, practical group session during which a comprehensive presentation is delivered. All the sessions are given by an OT and rehab assistant and cover the following areas:

- fear of falling
- risk factors
- exercise
- home safety
- aids and equipment
- medication
- vision
- balance
- footwear
- blood pressure
- memory problems
- healthy eating
- what to do if you have a fall at home
- community services

The session content is consolidated by each patient receiving an information pack which provides a variety of information and advice for patients and their families/carers. During the week, a display stand is also set up to highlight the area of falls awareness and prevention, with relevant information and resources available for patients.



On completion of the first set of sessions we designed a questionnaire which was given to all patients to obtain feedback and to help us evaluate and make appropriate changes to ensure we continue to deliver a high-quality service. The feedback was very positive with 100% of patients finding the falls awareness session beneficial.

Involvement in the group was very important as 72% of the patients who attended the sessions had a history of a fall and 44% had a fear of falling. Only 50% of patients had previously received information on falls prevention. The aspects of the sessions patients found most helpful were:

- general home safety
- footwear
- aids and equipment
- exercise
- how to get up from a fall

94% of patients thought it would be useful for family/carers to receive the information also.

The group format has proven so successful due to the interactive, engaging and practical nature of the session. Patients are able to see and try a variety of useful aids and equipment for which the Cosyfeet award has been a tremendous asset in helping us provide an invaluable stock of sample equipment, for example:

- kitchen trolley
- over bed table
- long handled reacher/shoe horn/sponge
- sock/tights aid
- leg lifter
- bags and baskets for a variety of walking aids
- handybar to assist getting in/out of car
- oxygen bag
- chair raisers

It makes such a difference for patients to have the opportunity to see and try aids and equipment and discuss their benefits within the group. The practical nature of the session promotes open discussion on a variety of aspects of falls prevention and encourages invaluable peer support.



As an OT department, we strive to provide a high-quality service, continually re-evaluating and adapting the service to meet our patients' needs. To this end we have taken on board that 94% of patients thought it would be useful for family members to receive the information. Therefore, when we now offer the sessions, family members are also invited to attend. The information packs are a great source of information and we continue to look at the resources we provide, ensuring they are relevant and up to date.

The running of the falls awareness and prevention sessions has proven to be very successful and a vital part of the OT programme offered within Day Hospice, which we continue to offer and develop. The Cosyfeet award has assisted us in fulfilling our aim of increasing patient awareness of falls, and ultimately reducing/preventing falls. It has also assisted us in raising awareness among families, carers, volunteers and staff.