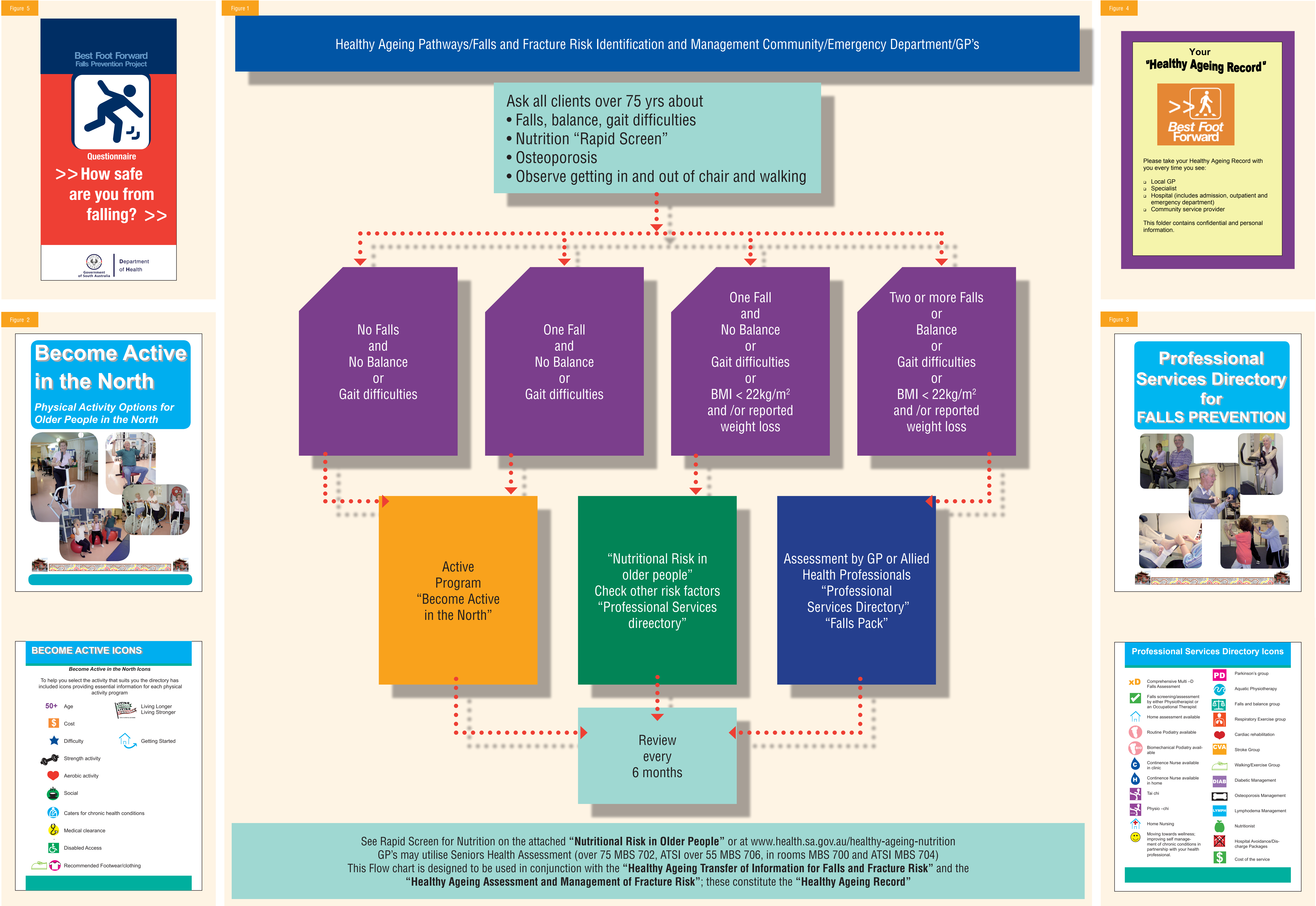


Establishing a Comprehensive Systems Approach to Falls Prevention in the Northern Metropolitan Area of Adelaide.

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BACKGROUND

In Australia, falls by people over 65 years cost the health system more than road accidents. By 2051 it has been estimated that health care costs related to falls in Australia will reach \$1375 million (Moller 2003). The South Australian Government allocated funding for the development and implementation of a falls injury prevention strategy over a two year period. The Northern Metropolitan Adelaide region was chosen as a target area for the 'Best Foot Forward' project due to the large number of older people residing in the area now, and the significant increase in the older population expected over the next ten years.

PROJECT AIM

To develop a comprehensive and effective systems approach to fall injury prevention among older people initially in the Salisbury and Playford Local Government areas and then the Tea Tree Gully Council area.

PROJECT STRATEGIES

The two year project is working simultaneously across community, residential care, acute care populations and services with a combined early prevention and risk management focus.

The "system" for fall injury prevention was developed by a review of current evidence and through community consultation. Implementation of the system involves training of organisations within the region in their role. A "Falls and Fracture Risk Identification and Management Flowchart" (see figure 1) gives an overview of the "system". This was based on Tinetti's Algorithm for Falls prevention with added predictors of low BMI and osteoporosis.

Associated resources include a consumer held "Healthy Ageing Record", transfer of information, assessment and management forms, "Spotters cards", directories, brochures and posters.

WHAT IS THE "SYSTEM"?

- **People identified as being at lower risk of falls** are provided with information on how to become and stay active, using the "Become Active in the North" booklet (see figure 2) and the "Active Pack".

- **People identified as being at higher risk of falls** are supplied with a "Falls Prevention Pack" containing information on Falls prevention and getting off the floor, Call Direct, hip protectors, Home Medicines Review, Osteoporosis and Commonwealth Carelink Magnet.

- To assist in referring to a suitable health professional a "Professional Services Directory for Falls Prevention" (see figure 3) has been developed.

- **Spotter cards** for falls risk, nutrition risk and medication risk have been developed to allow other health care workers such as Community Careworkers, to identify people at risk of falling and to fill in a postcard for the client to take to their GP.

- The consumer held **Healthy Ageing Record** (see figure 4) aims to:
 - Assist with the transfer of information between sectors and Health Professionals.
 - Prevent consumers having the same questions and assessments repeated when unwarranted.
 - Prompt Health Professionals to assess clients spotted as being at risk by workers in the community.

- Assist in the identification and management of Falls and Fracture risks.
- Assist consumers in understanding their own health issues.
- Allow families opportunities to encourage older people to take up recommendations made by Health professionals.

FEEDBACK TO DATE

Healthy Ageing Record

"It was useful in case I have to go to hospital in a hurry, all my records are there for the doctors to see."
"I am having a dietitian visit me regarding my weight problem to see I eat the correct food for my arthritis."
"Very useful for all my future problems and very grateful to everyone concerned."

The system and the Healthy Ageing Record

Feedback from the Acute Sector (n= 7 responses)

- Positive feedback
- Hard copy format appears the most useful
- The Healthy Ageing Pathways/ Falls and Fracture Risk Flow Diagram was the most useful resource in the Healthy Ageing Record

Unsolicited feedback from a PT within the region
"I find the Flow diagram, and Healthy Ageing Record really helpful while visiting clients and can easily work out what management strategies to use."

KEY MESSAGES

It is important to coordinate care across all sectors. Therefore the project has involved Acute, Community and Residential Aged Care and the transfer between sectors.

Not only the Health services are involved in Falls Prevention. This project has also involved councils, the fitness sector, volunteers, carer organisations, and consumers, linking them all with the Health sector.

Consumers need to be empowered to manage their own health. The Healthy Ageing Record facilitates this process.

For a message to be conveyed successfully to the consumer, their family and service providers it needs to be packed in a way that is:

- Eye catching
- Interesting
- User friendly
- Direct
- Easily understood

Acknowledgements:

This project is funded by the Department of Health Stay on Your Feet Adelaide West, and in particular Michele Sutherland for assistance especially in the early stages of the project Collaborators in the region, the Lyell McEwin Hospital and Primary Health Care Services North/ North East and Active Ageing SA

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