

## Concurrent D: Falls Prevention

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### PREVENTING FALLS IN OLDER PEOPLE: THE NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE

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**Background** New Zealand researchers have made major contributions to the development of proven falls prevention programmes in older people. National strategies for falls and injury prevention have been implemented.

**Objectives** To review the evidence from New Zealand related to preventing falls in older people and describe the nation wide approach to falls prevention in New Zealand.

**Methods** We reviewed the published literature on falls prevention in older people to determine the most effective, cost effective, and sustainable strategies for wide spread implementation.

**Outcome** The home based Otago Exercise Programme has been trialled extensively with different population groups. It is most cost effective in those 80 years and over. Tai chi is also effective in reducing falls. Psychotropic drug withdrawal is highly effective in reducing falls but has a low adherence and would be staff intensive if introduced as a public health measure. Occupational therapy assessment and home modification would be suitable for national implementation for those with severe visual impairment. The international literature shows that vitamin D supplementation reduces the rate of falls in nursing care residents with low serum vitamin D levels.

**Significance** Nation wide implementation has been achieved with the Otago Exercise Programme and tai chi, and vitamin D

supplementation for nursing care residents. Sustainability of optimal strategies requires collaboration across ACC, the Ministry of Health, local District Health Boards, Primary Health Organisations, and researchers.