



Information sheet for participants-Version no.5

Project title: Improving balance in community-dwelling elders using trained volunteers within local communities- A feasibility study.

Why are we doing this project?

According to the Age UK (2010) report, every minute, six people over 65 years or older have a fall. This results in fractures, disability, isolation and institutionalisation in a majority of those who have had a fall. However, falls can be prevented or reduced by improving strength, balance and endurance by doing specific exercises. There are limited resources in the NHS to provide services to improve balance and reduce falls to everyone above 65 years living in the community. Therefore, we need initiatives using local resources to improve this situation.

As a first step we need to train volunteers to enable them to deliver balance training programmes locally. Then we need to assess if programmes delivered by volunteers are feasible in the long run. We intend to set up a project where we will set up a group activity for people who are at the risk of falling to improve their balance in your local community such as your local church. This group activity will include balance education, group exercises once a week for 4 weeks, home exercises, individual balance assessments and advice. Since we must assess if such a programme is effective, we will have to compare this with a group of people who will not do exercises but listen to talks about general health issues and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Please read the following material and decide if you would like to participate. You can discuss the information with others and the persons carrying out the project before you agree to take part.

Who is doing the work?

This is a project done by academics and a physiotherapist from the University of Birmingham in collaboration with qualified physiotherapists who live locally. The contact details of personnel involved have been listed at the end of this information sheet.

Why are you being approached?

You have been approached since you are a part of this church community and are above the age of 65. If you feel you are off balance at times, at an increased risk of falling but not had a fall in past 6 months and willing to give consent to participate in the project please get in touch with us. It is important to note that participation is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to participate. If you think you need to improve your balance or

improve awareness about general health issues and this project will benefit you, please consider participation. You will have a simple test of sit to stand five times in a row and if you can do that, you will be able to participate in the project. Even if you decide to take part you will have the right to change your mind within four weeks of participation and may withdraw your assessment and outcome data without giving any reason. If you decide to withdraw your data after the 4 week deadline, unfortunately it cannot be done as your data would've been integrated within the whole data set and analysed by the fifth week.

What happens if you decide to participate?

If you decide to take part in the project, you will be asked to sign consent forms by one of the persons conducting the project. Please note that the churches involved in this project will be randomly allocated to one of the following interventions. If you attend a particular church you will have the opportunity to participate in the group activity that takes place in your church. Your church activity might either be:

- a) a group meeting where you will be able to listen to health awareness talks delivered by an academic and a health professional regarding health issues when we get older including information on falls and how to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Or

- b) a group where you will participate in exercise classes which runs for five weeks. In the first week you will be asked to come for assessment of your balance, ability to do certain daily activities, your confidence regarding your balance, your socialisation and quality of life. This will involve some simple questionnaires and physical tests that a physiotherapist would normally carry out to test your balance. In the first week assessments will be done and there will also be a talk about falls, risk factors and information on how to improve balance. In the following four weeks you will be participating in group exercises for 45 mins to help improve your balance and strength once a week. You will also be given exercises to do at home for 30 mins every day for 5 times a week. After 4 weeks of group activity and home exercises you will be re-assessed, and results will be shared with you.

Please note that you will not be able to choose which activity you are allocated to.

The programme will be run by qualified therapists supported by healthy volunteers and if needed your carers or partners can participate to support you. The entire programme will run for 5 weeks on suitable afternoons in the local church hall or village hall.

There will be a group discussion following this on a day convenient to the members of the group to let us know about the usefulness of the programme and how to improve it for the future. Please provide your phone number on the consent form if you have ticked yes for the group discussion. This will be helpful to communicate the arrangements about the groups. The focus group will take about 40-60 minutes.

If you decide to participate and if you have any special needs where you need help to fill in the questionnaire or participate in the focus group please let the researcher know. We will discuss your needs and make reasonable adjustments to include you in the study.

Are there any issues of confidentiality?

Questionnaires will only have alpha numeric codes and you won't be recognisable from this. The consent forms will have your name and contact details. These will be stored safely in locked cabinets. All information from assessment questionnaires and focus group will be made anonymous and stored securely in password protected laptops and hard copies will be stored in filing cabinets in the University office. All personal data will be made anonymous using codes. Data will not be shared with any person other than those involved in the project. Reports for the University and published data will not include your personal details.

Why should I participate?

Your participation is highly valued since it will help us to identify whether local programs for improving balance using volunteers is helpful to reduce risk of falling in elders. The information gathered will be used to write to councils recommending to set up more programs like this to improve health of elders in the community. It is possible that you will personally benefit by improving your knowledge about health issues or about falls and gain better balance if you are in the group having exercises.

Are there any risks?

There are no major risks associated if you join a balance improvement program. However, testing and training for balance has an inherent risk of falls as you will be challenging your current level of balance. But therapists will be beside you while doing the tests and exercises and will support you during these activities. You have the risk of overdoing exercises at home causing tiredness and muscle soreness. But you will be told how much you should do by the therapists and if you follow the advice you will not have these effects.

What happens at the end of the study?

The tests and assessments will be analysed and written up as a report for the church leaders and participants like yourself. These findings will then be published in journals and presented to professionals at conferences. The findings will also be written up as reports for the council to recommend them to set up similar programs for the long term. Anonymised data from this project will be used to support other similar work in the field of health.

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet and considering participation.

Contacts for further information

1. Sheeba Rosewilliam, School of Sports Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences, UoB.
Email: s.b.rosewilliam@bham.ac.uk . Phone:07872955548
2. Samy Selvanayagam, Physiotherapist, Dizzy care clinic, Codsall, Wolverhampton.
Phone: 07894546397