Proactive approach to living well and ageing well; primary care outreach and engagement in local community setting.

Summary brief for Hadwen Health's 'Patient Health, Fitness & Wellbeing Programme' for older people.

Background

After securing funding from Sport England with support from Active Gloucestershire, Hadwen Health ran a 12 week fitness and lifestyle information programme for patients aged 65 to 80. Each weekly session included an exercise activity alongside an informational lifestyle topic such as ageing well, exercising effectively, nutrition, weight management and alcohol consumption. The programme ran at a local community centre and was delivered by an external fitness and lifestyle provider Health Life Fitness (HLF).

Aims of the programme via the exercise component were to improve patients functional and health related fitness, while allowing them to experience a wide range of exercise formats. Aims for the informational lifestyle component were to provide patients with additional knowledge and support to help them maintain or improve their health and fitness, make positive lifestyle changes and manage or improve long term conditions such as pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes.

Methods

Patients were contacted directly by Hadwen Health to determine interest in attending the programme. Those expressing interest completed a screening process to show suitability for the programme. Additionally, three functional fitness ability tests were performed before and after the 12 week programme. These tests recorded changes in grip and lower limb strength, balance, mobility and power.

Thirty six participants with an average age of 71 completed the 12 week programme. After completion of the programme, patients were invited to complete a satisfaction questionnaire and feedback form about the programme. In total 31 (86%) of patients completed the questionnaire.

Results

Main outcomes for pre and post functional ability tests (see full report for more feedback data)

- Grip strength test: 3.8kg increase (12% improvement in grip strength)
- Five times sit to stand test: decrease of 3.8 seconds (23.6% increase in lower limb strength & power)
- Timed Up & Go test: decrease of 2 seconds (23.8% improvement in mobility and balance)

Main outcomes for feedback questionnaire (see full report for more feedback data)

- 94% of patients rated the programme as good to excellent
- 95% would recommend the health & fitness programme to a family member or friend
- 80% reported doing more physical activity (e.g. walking, cycling, swimming & exercising at home)
- 48% reported changed eating habits (e.g. snacking less and making better food choices)
- 88% reported having better hydration (drinking more water)
- 48% reported changed alcohol habits (e.g. drinking less alcohol and/or having alcohol free days)

Conclusions & sustainability

While limited in scope and participant numbers, this study indicates that a proactive approach by primary care organisations such as GP surgeries may have a constructive impact in older persons health related fitness. Additionally, provision of a lifestyle related educational component can provide information that could allow them adopt healthy lifestyle behaviours and/or improve health promotion. The use of a supportive social format assisted with adherence to the programme. Since completion of the programme, a weekly self sustainable exercise class has been run by HLF with over 90% of original patient cohort attending on a regular basis. The class has also attracted a number of patients registered at other surgeries.