CultureCase

Programmes like Dance to Health could save the NHS hundreds of millions of pounds a year

This research was conducted by **Simon Goldsmith** and **Themis Kokolakakis** at **Sheffield Hallam University**

Summary

This paper evaluated whether ‘Dance to Health’ was an ‘effective and cost-effective means to address the issue of older people's falls’. The research calculated how many falls were prevented by the programme and how much of a cost saving this provided the NHS and UK taxpayer. It concluded that as a result of the programme ‘there was a 58 per cent reduction in the number of falls. Furthermore, the results also demonstrate that Dance to Health offers a potential cost saving of more than £196m over a 2-year period, of which £158m is a potential cost saving for the NHS'.

The research followed more than 1,000 residents from care homes in England who were participating in the programme

The sessions were ‘led by professional dance artists’ who had been ‘fully trained and qualified in falls prevention exercise methods’. Questionnaires of the participants suggested that only 246 people had experienced a fall during the programme’s 56-week period – less than half the number of falls than would be expected. Those falls were also less severe on average, with only 13 per cent leading to admissions to Accident and Emergency.

Falls are very common among older people and they can be very dangerous

They can cause physical trauma which is costly for the NHS to treat and – for the oldest people especially – can have serious consequences for health and lifestyle. Despite knowing a fair amount about what works, a lot of falls prevention schemes are not informed by evidence and are unengaging for participants. Dance to Health was a frequent, regular and sustained activity which was creative, social, flexible and varied. This meant that participants adhered to the programme over a long period of time, which meant they benefited from increased muscle strength, greater balance, and possibly other wellbeing improvements.

Keywords

evaluation **dance** **UK** **health** **elderly**

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