

EVALUATION OF A COMMUNITY BASED EDUCATION PROGRAM: THE TAC MOBILITY CHOICES FOR OLDER ROAD USERS INITIATIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Independent personal mobility and/or vehicle transportation is important to support the goal of healthy ageing and maintenance of community engagement. Educational programs to promote maximum mobility and safety for older people should be a policy priority (1). This paper describes the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) initiative to develop and evaluate an evidence-based health promotion program targeting older road users.

Program development goals were related to provision of information about road safety, mobility options and resources as well as how health and ageing influence transportation independence. Relevant stakeholders included the TAC, VicRoads, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV), advocacy and research groups. Stakeholders were involved in a participatory model of program development facilitated by LaTrobe University staff. The resulting 45 minute group program was designed to incorporate an interactive format and include messages relevant to pedestrian, public transport, motorised scooters, and cycling transport modes as well as vehicle driving. Delivery by an expert Occupational Therapist (OT) trained in driver assessment was considered important to the program design and its' likely success. After trialing the content and format in a number of venues (see Figure 1), results were presented to stakeholders and final program parameters were established.

METHOD

Program evaluation included both participant and host group co-ordinator surveys. Findings of participant evaluation (utilising a pre-post research design) have been presented elsewhere (2). Host group respondents provided feedback via self-completion questionnaires as part of an on-going program quality assurance process. They indicated ratings on a likert scale and provided comments in relation to community mobility and road safety priority messages. Data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Figure 1: Photo of program delivery to an established group in a typical meeting venue.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents (n=47) were very satisfied with program content and delivery: they found the presentation practical and relevant to participant needs and were willing to recommend the program to other groups. Analysis of open-ended questions revealed that the most important take home road safety messages for co-ordinators were related to options for driver assessments, vehicle modifications, driver rehabilitation and alternative transportation.

CONCLUSIONS

Since its inception, the TAC and LaTrobe University have delivered the Community Mobility for Older People (CMOP) program to over 160 groups across Victoria in partnership with VicRoads and the RACV. Delivering formal presentations to organised groups is an effective way of reaching the "well elderly" to increase knowledge about community mobility and safety. The health promotion framework offers a mode of delivering road safety messages that may be more acceptable to older people compared to traditional methods, potentially facilitating higher rates of information retention and application. Further research is required to investigate this relationship and its' relevance to road safety education interventions.

REFERENCES

1. OECD (2001). *Ageing and Transport, mobility needs and safety issues*. Paris: OECD Publications.
2. Di Stefano, M., Lovell, R., Stone, K., Oh, S., & Cockfield, S. (2009). Supporting individuals to make informed personal mobility choices. *Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation*, 25, 1, 55 – 72.