



November 2010



UPFRONT: Mobility: Now You're Going Places

Wendy Lee Hamilton

Preventing Falls Together organized an exciting series of workshops in several sites around Nova Scotia this year with 347 participants in total! The workshops were funded by the New Horizons for Seniors Program. More workshops are scheduled for Guysborough and Bear River during Falls Prevention Week November 21-27, 2010. The Mobility Workshops came from a pilot project under the direction of gerontologist Christine Flegal of the British Columbia Institute of Technology. The main goal was to investigate the social stigma associated with use of assistive devices, such as canes, walkers and grab bars.

It is unfortunate that many people view the use of such tools as “giving in”. They feel that using a cane is a sign of physical incompetence—one step away from a wheelchair. Nothing could be further from the truth—canes make you feel more stable on your feet, enabling you to remain active, and participate in your community activities. When society is fixed on an idea, a social marketing campaign is often needed. Remember when people scoffed at wearing a seat belt? Yes, we can change people’s ideas!

The best people available to do that social marketing job are your own peers. The Mobility Workshops were designed so that presenters were experienced local

community members who use the tools that they spoke about. Each District Health Authority provided an occupational therapist or physiotherapist to be present to answer questions and remain known in each community as a source of future consultation. Local retailers of assistive devices and branches of the Red Cross also played a part, in providing samples of each tool and information regarding availability and pricing/rental or loan of items. Since the topic of assistive device use is viewed by some people as very intimidating, the workshops included five humorous vignettes about assistive devices by Canadian actor/comedian Don Harron in the character of “Charlie Farquharson”. Don is 87 yrs old and really does use a cane. Each attendee received a Seniors Information Toolkit and a “Frequently asked Questions” sheet with a list of loaners and retailers within each community

The one factor that determines how well we cope with life is our ability to make changes. No matter what your age, learning new things or changing the way we do familiar things is essential to successful living. A mental block to making change is, from my point of view, the number one barrier to successful aging.

My experience with recommending assistive devices is that people may have knowledge about walkers, but don’t know WHEN to start using them. My suggestion that “the time has arrived” is often upsetting to people. If I politely ask what signs are they waiting

for to start using a walker, people often respond with, “When I start falling”. The unfortunate truth is that your first fall can break a bone and change your ability to live independently. Therefore, the change is forced upon you. By not using a cane or walker (i.e. lower your risk of falling) you may be robbing yourself of years of independent living.

Wendy-Lee Hamilton is a physiotherapist with the Annapolis Valley Health Seniors LINCS program, and an active member of the Annapolis-Kings Preventing Falls Together Coalition.

See Charlie Farguharson talk about assistive devices on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGnwFL6vK2Q>

Assistive Devices: Nothing to Lose- Everything to Gain

Those of you familiar with falls prevention activities would know that reducing your risk of falls involves a multi-factorial approach. The main factors include:

- 1) health & physical mobility
- 2) the home environment
- 3) medication management
- 4) nutrition

This year our Falls Prevention Week theme is “Give the Gift of Mobility”. If you are concerned about your own family or friends’ mobility, consider the following list of signs that you can observe. People exhibiting these signs are at risk of falling and would benefit from using assistive tools.

- 1) Limping, even in the absence of pain.

- 2) Touching walls and furniture for support as they walk through their house
- 3) Avoidance of crowded rooms or busy sidewalks for fear of being bumped
- 4) Change in the time spent outdoors caring for their lawn or flower beds
- 5) Driving their car up on the lawn so that it can be closer to the door
- 6) Driving very short distances (garbage to end of driveway)
- 7) Grocery cart test: if a grocery cart boosts your walking confidence, a wheeled walker would be a great choice.

Following is some information about five common types of devices that may help.



Peer presenter and MC Johanna Hogeboom at the recent Kentville Mobility workshop

Canes

Canes provide a “third leg” and therefore improve our walking safety. Canes come in many varieties. The cane should be adjusted so the top of the cane is level with the crease of the wrist when your arm is hanging loosely at your side. Measuring should be done while wearing shoes. An occupational therapist,

physiotherapist or other health professional can help ensure your cane is the right height for you.

Walking with a cane

- Always use the cane on your strongest side, holding it in the OPPOSITE hand of the injured leg. If both sides are bad, you might consider using a walker.
- Move the cane and opposite leg together.
- Use a rubber tip that fits onto the bottom of the cane to prevent slipping

on wet surfaces. Replace worn rubber tips.

- Attach an ice pick in the winter.

Going up the stairs

- Stand close to the first step
- Step up with the stronger leg. Place this foot securely on the step.
- Then, leaning slightly forward, move the cane and weaker leg to that same step.

Going down the stairs

- Take the first step down with the cane and weaker leg.
- Then lower the strong leg to that same step.
- Remain erect, bending as little as possible.



Peer presenter
Marjorie Brewster at
the Kentville
Mobility Workshop

Walkers

Walkers are lightweight metal frames used for walking support. The most common types are the standard walker, the two-wheeled walker and the four-wheeled walker. Walkers should be used if you have moderate to severe concerns with balance, if you have a history of falls, and if you have pain/weakness affecting

both sides of your body. It is important to consult a health professional about choosing the best walker for your needs.

Standard walkers without wheels are light and easy to maneuver, and can support a lot of weight. However, they should be used on a level surface and should not be used outdoors.

Two wheeled walkers are good if you cannot lift the walker to move it forward. These too

are meant for level surfaces and are not a good choice for outside use.

Four wheeled walkers are suitable for outside use (sidewalks and paved surfaces), and often include a container for holding items and a built in seat. They have hand brakes, so you need to have the grip strength to apply the brakes.

Keep in mind that many homes are crowded with a lifetime accumulation of furniture. Most walkers are between 28" – 32" wide, so you may have to move furniture and/or floor clutter before a walker enters the house.

Never use a walker on stairs!

Grab Bars

People of all ages and abilities can benefit from using grab bars. You should use grab bars if you feel at all unsteady or are having difficulty raising and lowering yourself from any position.

Grab bars are designed to provide added stability when getting in and out of the bathtub or changing position from sitting to standing. Most grab bars are not designed to take the full weight of a person. Some can only bear a limited amount of weight, so it is important check the amount with the retailer or installer.

There are several different types of grab bars and other bathroom aids such as raised toilet seats. You can get help determining the best ones for you by talking to an occupational or physiotherapist.

Scooters

Scooters enable you to go where you need to without depending on someone else for a drive, in good weather at least. They operate on a rechargeable battery that usually lasts a few hours depending how far you go. They are available in either three or four wheel

models. The three wheel ones have only one wheel in the front, making them easier to turn but less stable than those with four wheels. To operate a scooter you must have the ability and strength to use the hand brakes.

Tips for purchasing and using a scooter include

- Consider a seat that swivels to make getting on and off easier.
- The battery pack can be quite heavy and needs to be charged often and changed occasionally. Check if you can do this before buying or think about who would be available to help you.
- You will need somewhere to store the scooter when it isn't being used and a way to get it in and out of the storage area.
- Carry a cell phone while you are using your scooter in case of an emergency.
- Prior to heading out on your scooter it is a good idea to map the routes you most often take to check for possible barriers and hazards.
- Make you and your scooter visible with flags, reflective strips, etc.
- Before you start using a scooter, check out the rules in your municipality by talking to the police, senior safety coordinators, or other users.

Hip Protectors:

Hip protectors are specially designed equipment to protect hip bones during a fall. They come in a variety of styles and are scientifically proven to prevent hip fractures and minimize injuries due to falling. Hip protectors protect you from hip injuries due to a fall, but do not prevent falls. They are best suited for those who are greatest risk of a

hip fracture – those who have balance concerns, confusion, weak bones (osteoporosis), have fallen before, or take several medications.

Hip protectors help when you are wearing them and should be worn as often as possible, indoors and out, as a fall can happen anywhere at any time. “Think of hip protectors as hockey pads for the ‘sport’ of life.”

Remember that every assistive device has to suit the abilities of the user and the environment that it will be used in. It is always wise to consult local Occupational Therapists or Physio's for advice on the best assistive device for the individual. Therapists can be found in hospital settings and in private practice so make use of your Yellow pages. If you want to borrow the recommended device before purchasing, call your local Red Cross. Some Red Cross loan items, like wheeled walkers, require a referral from an OT or PT.

The above article was prepared with information from Mobility: Now You're Going Places[™], BCIT & Tools for Living Well, The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross and Wendy Lee Hamilton.

Red Cross Community HELP Program (Health Equipment Loans)

provides more than 50,000 pieces of health equipment to Atlantic Canadians every year, ranging from crutches and canes to specialized equipment such as wheelchairs. Borrowing an assistive device from the Red Cross allows you to decide if it is right for you, or provides you with a device if your need is temporary.

Contact:

Community HELP Program

133 Troop Avenue

Burnside Business Park

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

B3B 2A7

Telephone: (902) 423-3680



Provincial Gathering – A Success

Approximately 100 representative from voluntary sector and non-profit organizations from across the province met at the Harborview Holiday Inn in Dartmouth to discuss the current status of the sector in Nova Scotia and across the country and to give some direction for action. This event was a partnership of Community Links with Imagine Canada and Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection- Volunteerism.

Minister of the Voluntary Sector and Labour and Workforce Development, Marilyn More, opened the gathering by announcing funding of \$800,000 for a new initiative to support Nova Scotia's 5800 voluntary sector organizations called the Voluntary Sector Professional Improvement Initiative. (Details will follow soon). Representatives from Imagine Canada, Brenda Cameron-Couch and Michelle Gauthier provided the national context as highlighted by its *Framework for Action*. Andrea Caven, now with Labour and Workforce Development- Voluntary Sector, helped link challenges identified by participants from Local Gatherings held across Nova Scotia to the Imagine Canada Drivers of Change. Participants spent time working on the identification priority driver and priority actions for the sector. There was interest in the sector having a strong voice; exploration of forming a sector council; and in addressing compensation and benefits issues for paid staff in the sector.

Participants also had presentation from local leaders in social innovation and

attended workshops on Social Financing; Risk Management and Volunteer Recruitment and Retention. A report from the session will soon be available on Community Links' web site at www.nscommunitylinks.ca.

Give the Gift of Mobility



This season, give the gift of mobility to a family member or friend. Below are some gift ideas:

- 🎁 a long handled shoe horn
- 🎁 hip protectors
- 🎁 ice grippers to fit over boots on icy days
- 🎁 grab bars for the bathtub, shower & by the toilet – include proper installation for safety
- 🎁 a bath chair or bench
- 🎁 a non-slip bathmat
- 🎁 reachers for reaching things in high or low places
- 🎁 an interesting cane to encourage use around the home
- 🎁 a metal cane tip for outside use on icy days
- 🎁 a walker or rollator (a walker with wheels & a seat) for greater staying power and independence

Devices like canes, walkers, & rollators need to be properly fitted by a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, or health equipment specialist



Ester (front) and other Guysborough PFT Coalition members hard at work.

Coalition Profile: Ester Baker Duggan

Ester Baker-Duggan is an active senior advocate in Guysborough County.

She lives on the shore of Chedabucto Bay in a household she shares with her husband, Don Duggan and her mother, Velma Baker. Ester says that keeping seniors healthy and independent is important on many levels so getting involved in the Guysborough County Preventing Falls Together coalition was, and continues to be, a good way to help. Also, Ester stays connected to the Antigonish coalition, because many Guysborough seniors use Antigonish town as their service center. It is also where they access their health care services for the most part.

Through the coalition, Ester became a facilitator for the Home Support Exercise Program, which is an exercise program for seniors in their homes. It helps them stay mobile and independent and at the same time reduces their risk of falling. The program was designed by the Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging, based at the University of Western Ontario.

Ester feels strongly that seniors in rural communities need access to health services which could be delivered in a wellness clinic setting. They need foot care clinics, diabetic clinics and blood

collection facilities. If seniors could access a nurse practitioner in a rural setting, it would save on the transportation costs required to get to a larger center. Some seniors can't afford these costs. She is also a strong proponent of age-friendly communities where homes, businesses, public buildings and institutions and environmental surroundings are designed in an age-friendly way, so that seniors can be as safe as possible.

Ester is also a member of the Guysborough Community Health Board, and represents the CHB with Cancer Care Nova Scotia. She also serves on the District Medical Center Board in Isaacs Harbour. She sees many similarities between the CHB's role and that of the Preventing Falls Together Coalition. "They are both working toward a population that is healthier mentally, physically, emotionally and socially. This common theme is used by both in their planning strategies."

Home Adaptations for Seniors” Independence (HASI)

Need grab bars installed in your home, but can't afford the cost? HASI may be able to help.

This program is offered by CMHC to low income seniors age 65 or older. It involves a forgivable loan of up to \$3500.

The adaptations should be minor items like bathtub grab bars and seats, handrails on stairs, walk in showers, lever handles on doors.

To find out more about these programs and how to apply, call 1-800-774-5130



Cranberry Apple Crisp

3 cups unpeeled, chopped apples 750 mL
 2 cups cranberries 500 mL
 3/4 cup granulated sugar 175 mL
 1 2 cups rolled oats 375 mL
 2 cup brown sugar 125 mL
 1/3 cup all- purpose flour 75 mL
 1/3 cup chopped pecans 75 mL
 1/4 cup melted butter 50 mL

Method

In an 8 inch (20 cm) square baking dish, combine apples, cranberries and granulated sugar, and mix thoroughly to blend. In a small bowl, combine rolled oats, brown sugar, flour and nuts until well mixed. Add butter and mix with a fork until the mixture forms a coarse crumb. Spread crumb mixture evenly over the fruit.

Bake in a preheated 350° F (180° C) oven for 1 hour or until fruit is tender. Serve hot with whipped cream or ice cream.



Cherry Cranberries

~ *Quick and easy, the cranberries keep their bright red colour and shape—hence the name.*

2 cups fresh cranberries
 1 cup white sugar
 1/2 cup water
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/8 teaspoon
 baking soda

Mix all ingredients together in a saucepan. Let it come to a full boil, then immediately take it off the heat. Put the cover on and let it cool completely. Store in the fridge in a glass jar. It will keep for 1-2 weeks.



Cranberry Carrot Bread

1 1/2 cups grated carrots
 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries
 1 cup brown sugar
 1 egg
 1 tsp lemon juice
 1 tsp baking soda
 3 Tbsp vegetable oil
 3 Tbsp poppy seeds
 1 cup boiling water
 2 cups flour
 2 tsp baking powder
 1 tsp cinnamon
 1/2 tsp salt

In large bowl, beat together oil and egg. Stir in carrots, cranberries, brown sugar, lemon juice, and soda. Pour on boiling water, and let rest. In a separate bowl, combine remaining ingredients. When carrot mixture has rested at least 10 mins., add flour mixture and stir just until moistened. Pour into greased loaf pan and bake at 350 F for 40 to 50 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 mins.



For a warm holiday brew, simmer a blend of cranberry and apple juice and add a little bundle of cloves and cinnamon sticks tied in a cheesecloth.



from Community Links Board and staff, and from all our Preventing Falls Together Coalition members.

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