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## Investigating community perspectives on falls prevention information seeking and delivery: Older person perceptions regarding preferences for falls prevention education using a world cafe approach

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***TITLE***

**Investigating community perspectives on falls prevention information seeking and delivery: Older person perceptions regarding preferences for falls prevention education using a World Cafe approach.**

Falls amongst older persons are a significant global socioeconomic problem and older adults have low levels of self-perceived risk and a lack of willingness to take up existing falls prevention strategies. The researchers believed that, given the challenges of delivering falls prevention information, meaningful engagement of community members would create solutions based on an understanding of what would work best for that community.

A world café community forum sought the opinions of 70 community dwelling older persons about their preferences on how they would best receive and seek falls prevention information that could prevent falls within their age group. The café was evaluated by participants and was seen as a highly positive experience and participants felt that learning occurred by way of interaction and “sharing of ideas”. Local communities could develop this participatory approach to engage older people in leading the translation of falls prevention evidence into practice.

## ***Background***

Falls amongst older persons are a global socioeconomic problem, with injurious falls resulting older people spending more than 1.3 million patient days in hospital in Australia annually (Tovell, Harrison, & Pointer, 2014). While there is conclusive evidence that interventions such as regular exercise can reduce falls (Gillespie LD et al., 2012) older people have been found to have low self-perceived risk of falls and low levels of knowledge about falls and falls prevention (Haines, Day, Hill, Clemson, & Finch, 2014; Hill, Hoffmann, McPhail, et al., 2011; Lee, McDermott, Hoffmann, & Haines, 2013). Furthermore, older people have also been shown to have limited engagement in falls prevention activities (Hill, Hoffmann, Beer, et al., 2011; Simek, McPhate, & Haines, 2012) (Dickinson et al., 2011; Yardley, Donovan-Hall, Francis, & Todd, 2007), We therefore decided to take a step back from evaluating older people's perceptions of falls programs and to re-engage the community in partnership to explore how they would prefer to seek and receive falls related information, also furthermore how they would like falls prevention education to be delivered. Thus, the informal approach of world café was deemed most appropriate for this audience in providing a casual and relaxed atmosphere to explore ideas, thoughts and beliefs around what the optimal community falls prevention education program would look like.

We wanted to explore whether the World Cafe approach was successful in encouraging older community dwelling adults to share their attitudes and experiences in a less formal

setting than a focus group. Secondly, rather than focusing solely on the information per se that was obtained from the forum on falls prevention, the aim was also to focus on feedback obtained from participants regarding how they found the experience in terms of sharing and receiving information from their peers.

Thus, the overarching objective of this study was to determine whether the world cafe would generate authentic and valuable data to enable the community and researchers to redesign falls prevention resources for older people.

## **Method**

### ***World Café Method***

This was an explorative qualitative study using the World Café approach to data collection. World cafe approach is a community participatory research approach which has previously been particularly successful in engaging with hard to reach groups such as the elderly, disadvantaged and stigmatised groups living within the community (Aldred, 2011; Emlet & Mocerri, 2011; Fouché & Light, 2011). It is maintained that the use of a less formal, cafe style atmosphere better encourages those marginalised populations to have a voice in terms of health and related social issues (Beebeejaun, Durose, Rees, Richardson, & Richardson, 2014; Ritch & Brennan, 2010) .

The World Café is a facilitated informal series of conversations around a set of predetermined issues as defined by those hosting the event (Aldred, 2011) In a sense the world cafe forum follows the remit of the conventional focus group process.

### ***Participants and Setting:***

Participants were a convenience sample of community-dwelling older people. They were Western Australian residents aged 60 years and over, did not live in a residential care facility and whose English language skills were sufficient to join in a group conversation and who accepted the invitation to attend the World Café forum around the topic of falls prevention education in the community.

### ***World Cafe Event Process***

The forum procedure was based on World Café's seven integrated principles (Fouché & Light, 2011). Briefly, these are: 1) set the context; 2) create a hospitable space; 3) explore the questions; 4) encourage everyone's contribution; 5) connect diverse perspectives; 6) listen together for patterns; and 7) share collective discoveries.

The emerging patterns were summarised by the facilitators to the entire world cafe participant audience referring back to the conversation question guide. In this way, the feedback was projected back to the forum attendees for their comment. The participants were then provided with the final opportunity to add any suggestions and to query researcher interpretation of the conversations and discussions. The forum participants were then requested to complete a written evaluation at the end of the world cafe forum.

### ***Analysis***

An inductive content analysis approach was selected as little was known regarding older peoples' motivation to participate in a community type forum about falls prevention

(Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) . As a preliminary sorting method a WORDLE™ was done to identify preliminary codes (Feinberg, 2014). Responses were then organised using open coding, category creation and abstraction of themes. Multiple categories were generated from the headings copied on to coding sheets. These were then grouped under higher order headings with the abstraction process in applying content-specific words to each category (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

## Results

Overall, seventy-three older adults (mean age 70+6.2years) of whom 85% were female attended the forum. Thirty participants (41%) reported one or more falls in the past year and 48 (66%) participants reported that they had not discussed falls with either their general practitioner or any other health professional.

Participants overall summative evaluation of the forum is presented in Table 1.

***Table 1. Participants' Summative Evaluation of the Forum***

<i>Item no</i>	<i>Item wording</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
1	Did the forum meet your expectations?	67 (95.7)	6 (4.3)
2	Did the forum cover issues/areas that are important to you?	65 (92.8)	7 (7.2)
3	Did you have an opportunity to put forward your opinion, ideas or priorities for research?	60 (85.7)	13 (14.3)

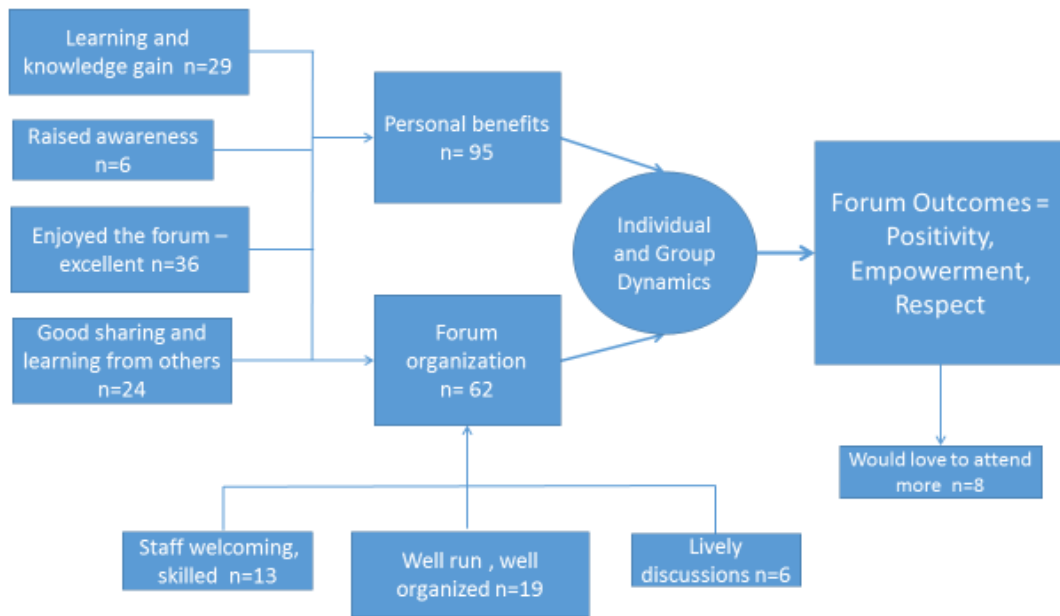


Figure 1. Wordle from forum participant feedback

The WORDLE™ (Figure 1) also highlighted participants’ positive response to the forum.

Participant individual open feedback regarding their perceptions of the world cafe experience was organised into six main categories which were then further sorted into two generic categories described as ‘personal gains and perspectives’ and ‘forum organisation focused perspectives’. An overarching main category was described as “the forum outcomes.” The matrix is shown in Figure 2.





**Figure 2 Evaluation feedback key participant themes**

**Category 1 - Personal gains and perspectives regarding the experience**

The three categories that described what participants felt they personally gained from the forum were “knowledge gain”, “enjoyment” and “awareness raising.” A further category described that enriched participants personal experience but also directly pertained to the forum format was “learning and sharing with others.”

**Knowledge gain**

Beyond the focus on addressing falls prevention strategies for the future, one unintended consequence was the learning experience for many participants. Some

participants stated that they were somewhat surprised by the levels of information and knowledge they gained. Others commented on how much they had learned from their peers at the table. For example, one wrote “*impressed with contributions from around the table.*” The concept of ‘mind searching’ on the topic of falls prevention was also highlighted by a participant who wrote,

*“There was a lot of mind searching and some valuable decisions were made.”*

### ***Enjoyment***

There was strong undercurrent of enjoyment and an element of fun for many of the participants as seen in the Wordle diagram as well as in the multiple comments. The older participants appeared to enjoy using humour to tackle the subject matter of falls prevention. When asked if they had been able to put forward ideas, one participant wrote, “ put forward ideas? Very much so!” One commented that the forum was required because,

*“We need to be reminded about falls prevention, to keep us “up and at ‘em.”*

### ***Awareness raising***

Participants commented that they hoped that the issues raised in the forum would “create an awareness around the loss of independence that older persons experience through fear of falling.” Another stated that

*“This as an area that will affect all of us at some stage, so working on prevention strategies is great.”*

### ***Learning and sharing with others***

In addition to finding the world cafe informative, participants repeatedly commented and appeared to strongly concur that the learning occurred by way of interaction and “sharing of ideas” with other participants, along with the interaction with researchers and community organisations.

*“Sharing ideas in an informed way was a great educational and beneficial exercise. I learned a lot”*

World cafe participants generally believed that they had had the “chance to be heard” and to “have their opinions voiced.” Some participants reflected that this helped them learn as it was “great to be able to put forward my thoughts –great to share”... I enjoyed others ideas.” One participant termed it as “looking at things from another perspective,” although another noted that it was perceived that each world cafe round was somewhat ‘rushed’ and that they would have preferred more time for each question area.

This perception of the value of learning and sharing was also seen to feed into participants’ positive evaluation of the forum format and how the day was organised. Participants concurred that there was “good exchange of ideas and thoughts” and one participant commented on the format as

*“Group discussion at times very animated! We had fun and the chance to express our opinions”*

While one participant commented that “some people tended to dominate with long (unclear) stories” they qualified their feedback by stating that “the facilitators handled it well.” Other participants stated that “facilitators did well to draw out opinions from all” and “there were plenty of opportunities to speak out at the forum.”

### ***Category 2 - Forum organisation perspectives***

Participants were overwhelmingly affirmative about the forum. Identified key words were very positive with many participants thanking the organisers for the event. The feedback was regarded as particularly enthusiastic with some participants noting that it was a “...wonderful experience.” One participant noted that “the forum was absolutely fabulous” and another wrote,

*“I would like more days like this – Convey my sincere thanks for a wonderful time – knowledge and info much appreciated.”*

Overall the world cafe was seen as empowering, positive and promoting respect for older people with one participant stating that it was an “excellent forum on life and life changes, the challenges that presents us humans at any age but some especially at seniors.” A number of participants similarly pointed out the empowering experience of having ‘a voice.’ As one participant noted,

*“Great to be able to put forward my thoughts – great to be heard. Great you’re doing something about falls prevention”*

Overall the participants felt empowered and motivated and felt able to ‘speak up.’ One participant highlighted the fact that until the world cafe forum they felt unable to ‘be heard’ by health professionals. One participant articulated this as being ‘listened to’ rather than being ‘talked at’. He said,

*“It is good to see you focus on listening to older adults rather than talking at them. I hope this information is disseminated to allied health professionals.”*

Some participants suggested that event should occur again, stating “lets have more like this” and “please keep them going... need follow up.”

### ***Discussion***

Through a series of café style informal ‘conversations’, the forum enabled us to cultivate, stimulate and capture the views of community dwelling individuals aged 60 and above. The resultant enthusiasm from participants demonstrated the need for older adults living in the community to be engaged in this manner in order to create meaningful ways of connecting with this sector of the population in learning about falls prevention. The world cafe event demonstrated that the approach was a success in providing the best age appropriate mechanism for discussing issues of importance

within that group. Specifically, engaging older adults in an informal and welcoming manner to discuss ideas in a supportive and non-threatening manner is appealing to this age range. This is in keeping with other research around engaging older adults in health and lifestyle discussions whereby ‘talking down’ to older persons created a barrier to encouraging them to adopt healthier lifestyle practices (Ligthart et al., 2015; Ryan, Hummert, & Boich, 1995; Woolhead, Calnan, Dieppe, & Tadd, 2004).

The authors believe that using the world cafe forum methodology facilitates the garnering of community opinions thereby providing possible explanation as to why the uptake for current strategies for community falls prevention are not optimal. Further to this, involving community members in the design of any information provided ensures that the individual and the community as a whole are empowered to seek solutions to issues such as falls prevention education uptake. The marked knowledge gain, enjoyment, empowerment and motivation is in contrast to other falls studies amongst the older population. Previous studies have found that older people can perceive that participating in falls prevention programmes is not helpful and can result in loss of autonomy and a sense of identity (Dickinson et al., 2011; Evron, Schultz-Larsen, & Fristrup, 2009) (McInnes & Askie, 2004). The key difference with the world cafe approach in this study was that participants felt respected, listened to and enjoyed the experience.

The collective intelligence of the World Cafe group forged insights, recommendations and solutions towards falls prevention. As one participant re-iterated as a key reason for participating in the World Cafe forum,

*“What we want is to stay out of hospitals and residential care. What we want is to stay in the community.” participant at Falls Prevention-World Café Forum 2014, Perth*

While this event was targeted according to local needs, these findings confirm that it is important to organise procedures with these factors in mind when conducting participatory research among older people.

### ***Limitations***

The use of world café approach for a larger number of community participants requires resources which can put pressure on research budgets in order to be successful.

Furthermore, maintaining community enthusiasm beyond the event requires ongoing communication and engagement with this community. There is a potential that attendees may be more mobile and engaged amongst certain sectors of the community as evinced by the demographic for this study of participants from a higher SES and at an overall higher educational level.

### ***Conclusion***

The falls prevention World Cafe was deemed successful in terms of creating a mechanism to examine the current status of falls prevention information in terms of community understanding and acceptance thereof. Additionally, the World Cafe forum served as a forum to enable participants to discuss ideas, hopes and beliefs as to how peer educator falls prevention information could be more successfully delivered in the future. By including the community perspective and voices, it is hoped that future programs in this area would be more acceptable to the community.

At the end of the conversational process, feasible, practical and accessible client-oriented examples and solutions were proposed and harvested. Reframing key issues and re-examining current practices are crucial to the effective delivery of falls prevention information.

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