

# Seniors' Falls Committee Update, January 2010

## SENIORS' FALLS—THE IMPACT TO OUR PROVINCE

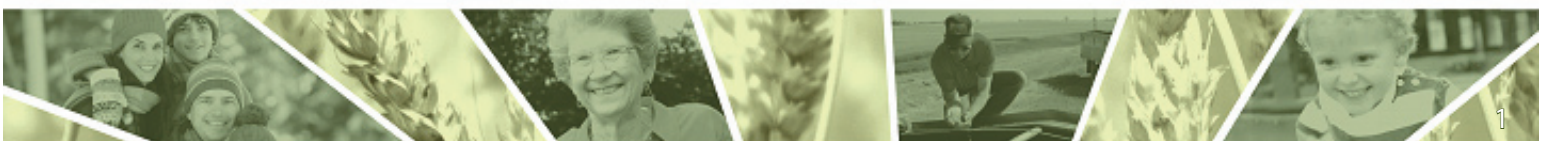
- Every year, \$57 million (1998) in direct costs are spent on seniors' falls (2009 indexed value is \$70.9 million).
- There are 9,800 hospitalizations annually and almost one-third of all injury hospitalizations are the result of seniors' falls—the leading mechanism for all injury hospitalizations in Saskatchewan.
- 40 per cent of seniors' fall hospitalizations are hip fractures; 30 per cent of older adults who fracture their hips die within the first year post fracture and another 30 percent are admitted to nursing homes or long term care.
- 70 per cent of seniors' falls occur in and around the home.
- The average length of one hospital stay is seven days. Seniors' falls hospitalizations result in 40-50 per cent longer lengths of one visit than any other seniors' hospitalization.
- 18 per cent of all seniors' falls hospitalizations result in a transfer to a geriatric centre or nursing home.
- 6 per cent of hospitalizations due to seniors' falls result in death.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION—A HISTORY OF THE SENIORS' FALLS INJURY PREVENTION STRATEGY (SFIPS)

If one date could be selected for the germination of this strategy it would be September 22, 2006. The Saskatoon Falls Prevention Consortium sponsored a symposium on seniors' falls with a number of key practitioners gathering to listen to speakers from across Canada. It planted the seed for action.

A couple of months later, on a blustery November day in 2006, representatives from numerous organizations arrived in Regina, Saskatchewan to talk about seniors' falls. Safe Saskatchewan coordinated that day and has continued to move forward on the development of a Strategy for Saskatchewan. Over 80 individuals representing nearly every organization involved with seniors' falls injury prevention were invited to attend the first workshop. About half that number arrived and together the group created the first key elements of a strategic framework: Vision and Mission statements; goals and action items.

One of the key outcomes of the workshop in November was the establishment of a Steering Committee. A number of people committed to volunteer their time to continue developing the Strategy. This Committee, now including representatives from all Regional Health Authorities and organizations involved with seniors' falls injury prevention, will oversee all future initiatives that will be taken to reduce seniors' falls over the next five years. At the first Steering Committee meeting in March 2007, Safe Saskatchewan introduced its role, provided a mandate document and a first draft of the Strategy for discussion and development.



The committee decided on a number of critical action items:

- achieve absolute representation from all health regions;
- use a rate reduction goal;
- get support from Saskatchewan Health; and
- develop a framework document, using other jurisdictions as examples.

June 2007 saw the Steering Committee gathering again in a working session. During the session, the group refined the Strategy objective and settled on the following target:

By December 31, 2015, reduce the rate of fall-related injuries that result in hospitalizations by 10 per cent in the 65 plus age group.

The group promoted the use of an established model and took its lead from other jurisdictions that have already created their own successful seniors' falls injury prevention strategies. During the rest of the day, using a "population health promotion" approach, the team developed three goals to be achieved in four key settings. In addition, action areas and guiding principles were developed.

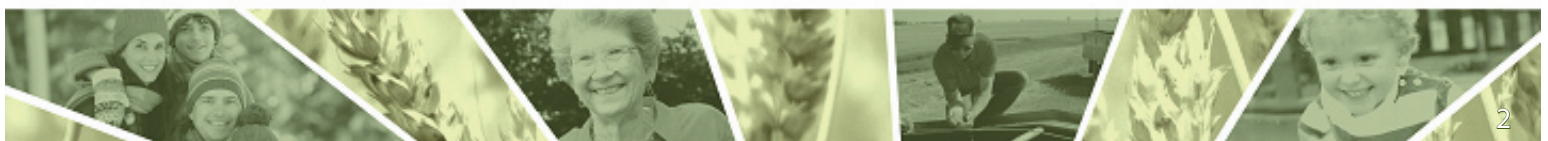
The strategy framework developed is the first of its kind in Saskatchewan. By unifying the many provincial participants in seniors' care and service in a single strategy, it is the hope of Safe Saskatchewan, the Steering Committee, and the organizations involved, to combine the considerable knowledge and resources present to reach our goal of reducing the number of hospitalizations due to seniors' falls. When falls are reduced, so is the impact on Saskatchewan's health budget, the extra burden placed on our health care system, and the lives of seniors are improved.

## AN INVESTMENT THAT MAKE DOLLARS AND SENSE—THE BUSINESS CASE FOR A SENIORS' FALLS INJURY PREVENTION

Using the Cypress Heath Region (CHR) as an example, the business case provides a very clear picture of the need to dedicate resources to seniors' fall prevention and demonstrates the exponential return on the investments made. In the CHR, 18.4 per cent of the population is in the 65 plus age category. This is higher than the provincial average of 15 per cent. In the 2005-06 year, the falls hospitalization rate (per 1,000 of population aged 65 plus) was 29.5 for females and 20.2 for males. This is higher than the provincial rates of 26.4 and 14.3 respectively. Overall, the CHR's 10 year average of hospitalizations from fall injuries to seniors is 193 per year.

Based on the above data, every year the CHR can attribute 193 of their total hospitalizations to seniors' falls. This injury ends up using 1,351 bed days for a total direct cost to the Health Region of \$3.53 million annually.

For every investment of \$100,000 that is directed towards dedicating resources to seniors' fall prevention, and that results in a 10 per cent decrease in hospitalizations, 19 fewer beds will be used. With an average hospital stay for seniors' falls at 7 days, 135 bed days would then be available for other acute care needs. Annual cost savings to CHR would be in the neighbourhood of \$353,000, yielding a 353 per cent return on the \$100,000 investment made.



## THE SENIORS' FALLS PREVENTION STRATEGY—SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Key milestones have been a validation of the need to work together to prevent seniors' falls in our province:

- The Saskatchewan Ministry of Health acknowledges and supports the SFIPS.
- Accreditation Canada's Required Organizational Practices calls for fall strategies to be developed in acute and long term care facilities.
- The Ministry of Health's, Seniors Care Strategy now includes seniors' fall prevention as an integral element.
- The Patient First Review—"For Patients' Sake" report acknowledged the role of prevention in our provincial health care system. Recommendation number 10 of the report states "That the Saskatchewan government and health system pursue an aggressive and targeted emphasis on the promotion of good health and the prevention of illness and injury in Saskatchewan. Not only will this pay dividends in a healthier and more productive populace, it will help to ensure that Saskatchewan's health system is ready and able to help all of us when we need it most."
- The Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative recognizes that seniors' fall prevention will have a direct and immediate positive impact by reducing the number of surgeries, decreasing surgical wait times and enhancing the client experience within the health care system.

## SAFE SASKATCHEWAN CONTINUES TO HELP THE SENIORS' FALLS COMMITTEE MOVE THE PROVINCIAL STRATEGY FORWARD

From the spring- summer of 2009 to the present, Safe Saskatchewan has been meeting with health region senior leadership teams to talk about SFIPS and discuss the potential of dedicating resources to seniors' fall prevention in their region. Securing these meeting opportunities will continue in 2010 and with the support and assistance of the SFIPS Committee and others, doors will continue to be opened.

Safe Saskatchewan would like to thank all past and present members of the Seniors' Falls Injury Prevention Steering Committee for each individual's support and guidance. Your tireless efforts and continual advocacy has started to position injury prevention as a societal priority and one our province cannot ignore.

