

# Stepping On with Recovery:

## Reducing Falls Risk and Improving Health and Wellbeing in Community Mental Health.

Mandy Meehan & Diane Grayshon

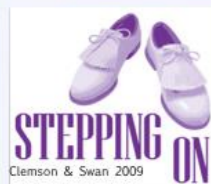


Falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury in older adults in Australia. Current evidence suggests people with serious and enduring mental illness fall more than any aged-matched population (Scanlon, Wheatley & McIntosh, 2014).

Research has demonstrated a correlation between depression, anxiety and falls risk. There are several studies on falls in mental health inpatient units, however little information regarding falls in community mental health settings. Mental Health fall risk factors can include; diagnostic and co-morbidities (including drug and alcohol), medication (particularly antidepressants and psychotropic medications), mental state (agitation, impulsivity, poor judgement, decrease alertness / concentration), behavioural, social and health factors (low income, social isolation, poor nutrition, smoking, diabetes and obesity).

Falls pose a challenge for consumers who live independently in the community, with many suffering injurious falls and hospitalisation. We know that falls are a catalyst for disability in older adults and this has been observed in younger consumers with enduring mental illness. People living with mental illness have poorer physical health, yet they receive less and lower quality health care than the rest of the population. As a result people with psychosis die between 14 and 23 years earlier than the general population.

Mental Health Services have an important responsibility in empowering consumers to improve their mental health and physical wellbeing. Effective health promotion, prevention and early intervention with a recovery focus will help people living with mental illness live healthy, contributing lives, both socially and economically. (NMHC Equally Well, 2016).



**Stepping On** is an evidence based falls prevention program, resulting in a 31% reduction in falls over 14 months. Run over seven weeks, Stepping On employs cognitive behavioral techniques and mixed adult learning strategies. This design promotes self efficacy by encouraging the regular uptake of exercise and self assessment of personal falls risks.

Stepping On has been employed successfully by Older People's Mental Health Services (OPMHS) across NSW and proven very effective at reducing falls, anxiety and increasing participant confidence.

### At Ryde OPMHS Stepping On Groups are a component of our Health & Wellness Program: Bridging the gap between Mental Health and Physical Health.

- The program has expanded to include consumers 50+ in recognition of the fall risk in adults with enduring mental illness after a successful pilot in 2015.
- It is recognised that many of our consumers require additional time to engage, master exercise skills and learn new concepts.
- The structure of Stepping On has been maintained, but delivered at a slower pace. Topics are introduced 1 per session. The pathway program on offer encourages good health, raises awareness of safety and help consumers to make choices with the support of their peers. Falls safety messages are repeated at each stage.
- Challenges include; transport costs and availability, participant motivation and confidence to attend falls prevention programs, lack of self awareness of falls risk, lack of resources and low cost programs available (particularly for the <65yo).
- Links to community networks and programs are an essential component to ongoing success.
- After a successful Yoga pilot study in 2013 we have again secured additional funding for 8 weeks of yoga in 2018/2019 following a falls competition win!
- Employment of an Exercise Physiologist at NorthShore Ryde Mental Health Services has led to opportunities for consumers to attend ongoing falls exercise classes 1 x week. We hope to add this to our program in 2019.
- These initiatives ensures the pathway for engagement and change in physical health is better maintained.

### STEPPING ON WITH RECOVERY

#### Stepping On with Recovery - The Stats!

- 9 Stepping On with Recovery Groups (between 2013 - 2018)
- 90 Consumers have attended Stepping On since 2013
- AGE RANGE of participants from 55yo to 93yo.
- Groups have been beneficial for both older and younger consumers with mood disorders and anxiety as well as those with enduring mental illness (Schizophrenia)
- 16 consumers have repeated the program as either a refresher or to build on their knowledge, master skills and lower their risk of falls.

#### Outcome Measures

##### (Near Tandem Stance, Sit to Stand, Timed Up and Go)

- 100% of participants that completed the program gained improvements in both strength and balance scores

#### Younger Consumers:

- All participants had very poor balance scores, which improved significantly.
- Strength was within normal range, which improved upon completion of the program.
- Walking speed was reduced in most participants as they adopted the heel toe gait, scanned and displayed increased environmental awareness.



#### References:

- 1 Scanlon, J., Wheatley, J., & Macintosh, S. (2014). Characteristics of falls in inpatient psychiatric units. Australian Psychiatry, 4 (20), 305-308.
- 2 National Mental Health Commission: Equally Well Consensus Statement: Improving the physical health and wellbeing of people living with mental illness in Australia. Sydney NMHC, 2016.

Mandy Meehan is an Occupational Therapist and is currently the Team Leader at the Ryde Older People's Mental Health Service. Mandy has an interest in the development and implementation of education and support to staff to enable the delivery of innovative, high quality, evidence based clinical care with a particular interest in person centred recovery focused, physical health and falls prevention for mental health consumers. Mandy represents Mental Health at NSLHD falls prevention committees and the NSW Falls Prevention Advisory Committee.  
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# Stepping On with Recovery

## An Update

Mandy Meehan  
Team Leader  
Ryde OPMHS



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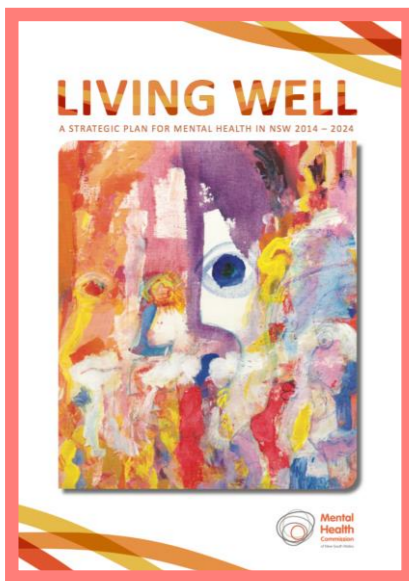
# STEPPING ON WITH RECOVERY

LINKING COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS TO EVIDENCE BASED FALLS PREVENTION

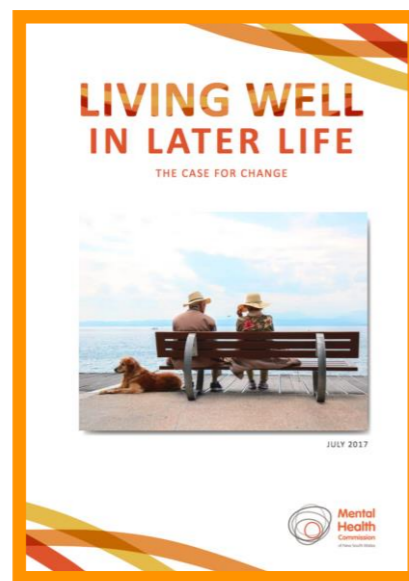


## STEPPING ON

Clemson & Swan, 2008



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National Mental Health Commission: Equally Well Consensus Statement: Improving the physical health and wellbeing of people living with mental illness in Australia, Sydney NMHC, 2016

Wellness Clinics Centre Based & Outreach

Studio Men / Women's Health Group

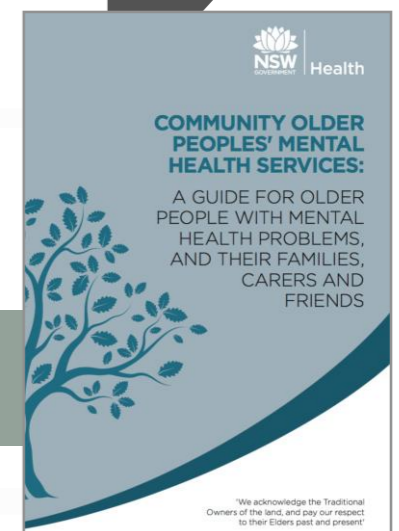
Stepping On @ The Studio

Exercise with Healthy Lifestyle Program

## Physical Health & Falls Prevention



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# Understanding Falls in Community Dwelling Adults with Enduring Mental Illness: A Clinical Practice Improvement Project

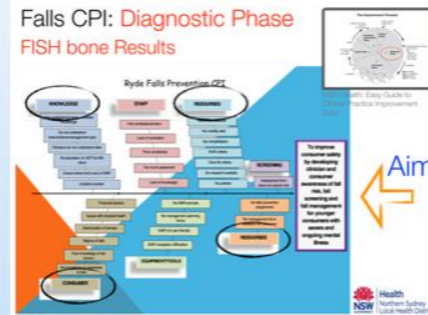
Diane Grayshon & Mandy Meehan



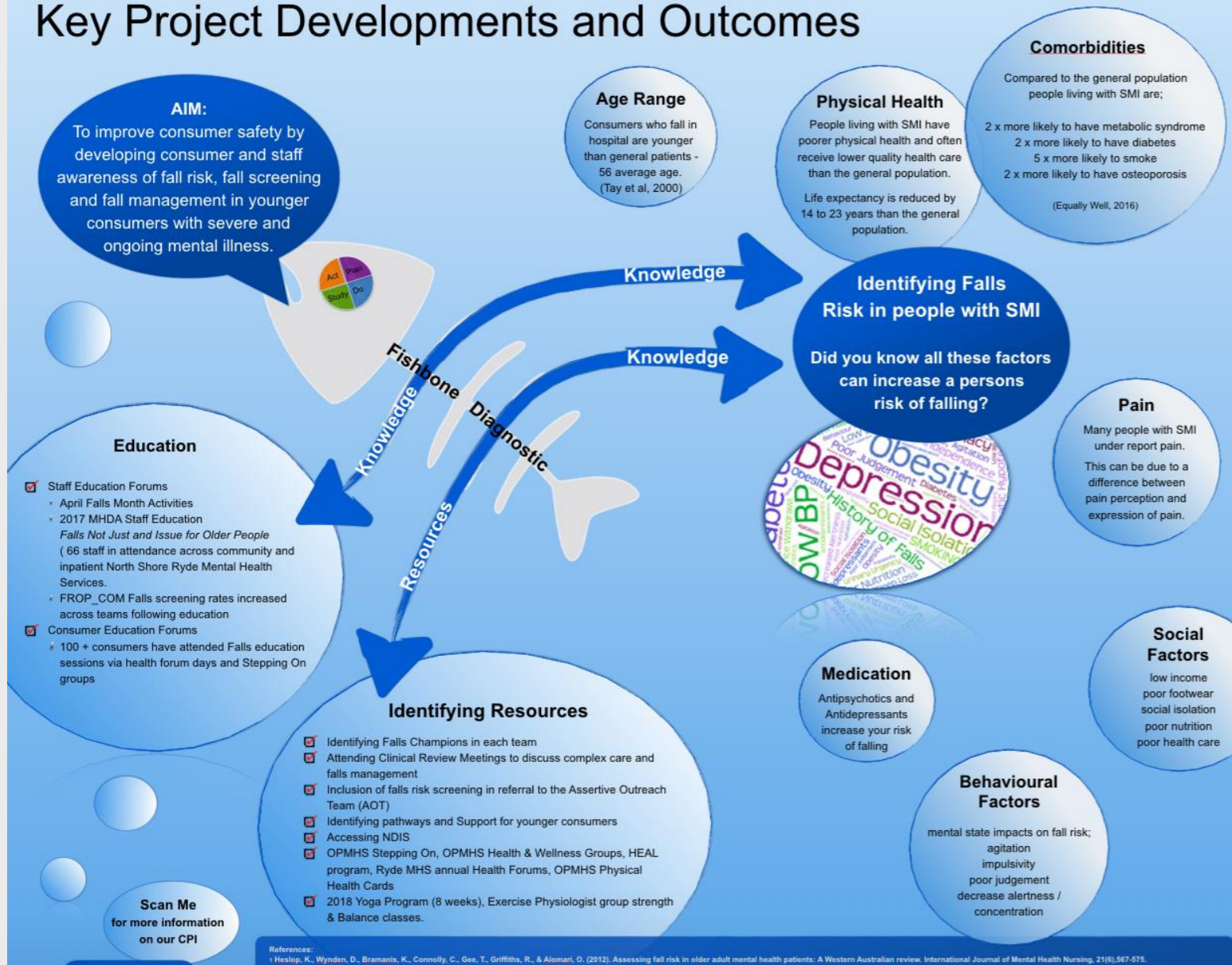
Emphasis is now on moving consumers with severe and enduring mental illness (SMI) out of long-term care and into the community for intensive management (Heslop et al., 2012). As a result community mental health teams are managing consumers with multiple comorbidities and complex physical risks; one of particular concern is an increase in risk of falling.

Following a number of injurious falls in community dwelling adults with SMI, case managers at Ryde Community Mental Health Centre chose to adopt a continued practice improvement framework to increase consumer safety. The framework was used to improve fall identification, increase risk screening and introduce a consumer fall management programme. The aim was to engage all stakeholders, explore barriers to identifying risk using the Fishbone diagnostic technique and to create a culture of safety by developing consumer and clinician falls knowledge and awareness.

The project resulted in an increase in falls awareness in consumers and care coordinators. Consumers were invited to attend falls education and a community mental health service based Stepping On program, aiming to reduce fear of falling and improve strength and balance. Similarly, following peer education sessions, a surge in clinical falls knowledge and awareness enabled a cultural shift from an atomistic approach to care, to a holistic style of care.



## Key Project Developments and Outcomes



References:  
1 Heslop, K., Wyden, D., Bramanis, K., Connolly, C., Gee, T., Griffiths, R., & Alomari, O. (2012). Assessing fall risk in older adult mental health patients: A Western Australian review. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 21(6), 567-575.  
2 Tay, S., Quek, C., Pariyasami, S., Ong, B., Wee, B., Yeo, J., et al. (2000). Falls incidence at a state psychiatric hospital in Singapore. *Journal of Psychological Nursing and Mental Health Services*, 38(9), 10-16.

# Stepping On with Recovery

## An Update

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LINKING COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS TO EVIDENCE BASED FALLS PREVENTION



Clemson & Swan, 2008

## 2013 Stepping On: SMSHOP Pilot

- 10 Participants (all female)
  - 70% Depression & Anxiety
  - 30% Psychotic Illness
- 90% participants reported decreased psychological distress (measure; Kelser 10+)
- 90% improvement in all Strength & Balance test (TUG, Near Tandem Stance, Sit to Stand)
- 1 x Participant - no Post evaluation measures taken



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## STEPPING ON

Clemson & Swan, 2008

## The nature of falls experienced by older people living in the community with a mental illness: A qualitative study.

Investigators: Assoc. Prof. Lynette Mackenzie (University of Sydney)  
Dr Meryl Lovarini (University of Sydney)  
Mandy Meehan (Occupational Therapist, NSLHD)  
Diane Grayshon (Clinical Nurse Specialist, NSLHD)  
Ling Koh (MOT research student, University of Sydney)

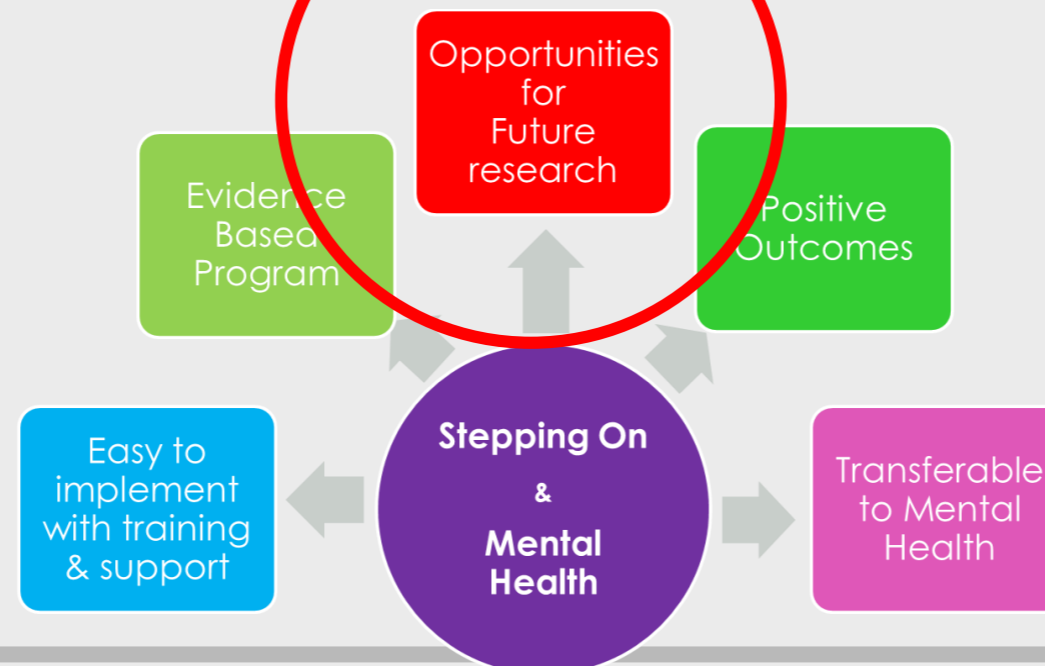


Advanced Health Research and Translation Centre

Medical Research Future Fund Rapid Applied Research  
Translation funding - Round 3

A tailored falls prevention program for older people with mental illness  
living in the community

Dr Meryl Lovarini  
NSLHD



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