**Good mental health prevents falls**

Good mental health plays an essential role in keeping elderly people on their feet and preventing major injury through falls, according to research from The Australian National University.

Professor Anstey said that falls constitute a major public health problem in later life and are the leading cause unintentional injury and hospitalisation in persons aged 65 and older. With age the danger of falling rises steadily and the risk of death after being hospitalised for a fall is approximately 50 per cent. The cost to the Australian economy from the one in three older adults living at home that have falls each year is over $1 billion annually. Those falls account for 11 per cent of hospital bed days in Australians aged 65 and older.

For the study, the participants were assessed three times over eight years on measures of well being including depressive symptoms, morale and sense of control over their lives.

“After taking into account factors such as age, gender and education as well as whether participants took psychotropic medication, had serious medical conditions or poor balance, we found that lower scores on the well being measures at the first assessment were associated with increased risk of falling over the eight year follow up interval,” said Professor Anstey.

“The study also showed that there was an increasing fall rate over time among individuals who reported an increase in depressive symptoms or reduction in morale during the course of the study.”

She added that to reduce the danger of damaging falls for Australia’s elderly it was essential to promote good mental health.

“The findings of this study clearly show that mental health is strongly linked to physical function in later life and that promoting good mental health as we age has benefits for physical function and mobility. Good mental health is an integral part of healthy ageing,” she said.

The study, conducted with Professor Mary Luszcz from Flinders University, used participants from the Australian Longitudinal Study of Ageing.

For more information read the entire article: