

Raising awareness of falls prevention: A guide to running campaign activities





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ProFouND: The Prevention of Falls Network for Dissemination (ProFouND) is an EC funded initiative dedicated to bring about the dissemination and implementation of best practice in falls prevention across Europe. ProFouND comprises 21 partners from 12 countries, associate members from a further 10 countries. ProFouND aims to influence policy to increase awareness of falls and innovative prevention programmes amongst health and social care authorities, the commercial sector, NGOs and the general public so as to facilitate communities of interest and disseminate the work of the network to target groups across EU. www.profound.eu.com

Further information on EC funded projects on falls prevention can be found at www.fallsprevention.eu



The European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA) aims to increase the healthy lifespan of EU citizens by 2 years on average by 2020. It is aiming for a triple win: a better quality of life, more sustainable systems for health and social care, and innovation, jobs and economic growth. The Partnerships success depends on the involvement of key players from public and private sectors. For more information, visit http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?section=active-healthy-ageing

The EIP-AHA Action on Falls Prevention is made up of more than 70 organisations from all over the EU including universities and research groups, public authorities, health providers, industry, non-governmental organisations representing citizens, older people, patients and others interested in the field. The plan is to identify best practice and support the introduction of evidence based operational programmes for prevention of falls, early identification and minimisation of risk and good clinical management of people who fall. The EIP-AHA on Falls Prevention is supported by two EC funded networks



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International Day of Older Persons On December 14, 1990, the UN General Assembly made October 1 the International Day of Older Persons See http://www.who.int/ageing/events/idop_rationale/en/

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Introduction

With so many different cultures and countries within the European region it can sometimes be difficult to agree on approaches to falls prevention that work for everyone. We all have different ways of working; the way our services are set up and the types of agencies and organisations we employ to deliver them vary greatly.

When it comes to things like exercise programmes and assessment tools, we can and we must insist on a 'prescribed' approach - one that follows the evidence base. But, when it comes to awareness campaigning, the rules are different. The most important thing in this regard is engagement, and in order for us to engage effectively - whatever the topic - we must tailor our messages and activities to suit the customs and cultures of the communities we are working with.

This guide has been written with this in mind. It has been designed as a practical resource to equip you with ideas and examples to help you plan activities and tailor them to your own communities and settings. We hope it will inspire you to start campaigning for better awareness of falls prevention, whether this is part of a regionally or nationally co-ordinated campaign - like Falls Awareness Week or International Older People's Day - or simply as a one-off event in your local area.

What is falls awareness campaigning?

Falls awareness campaigning is the act of raising awareness of the risk of falls, as well as the things that older people can do to help prevent them. It is often done by engaging local populations and groups of people in community events and activities. These events can be big, multi-agency events, or smaller activities, which are led by an individual or team, and focus on a single intervention. Typical activities include talks and presentations, exercise sessions and games and quizzes.

Why are local events important?

Local events and activities help to prevent falls in a number of ways. Firstly, and most importantly, they offer a way of overcoming one of the biggest barriers to effective falls prevention: the attitudes of older people.

Falling is commonly seen as an inevitable part of ageing. Most older people expect to fall as they get older, and they will accept it without question. What's more, they are unlikely to:

- know that anything can be done to prevent a fall.
- accept that they are at risk (and be seen as 'a faller').
- know where to go for help.
- speak to a doctor or health professional about their fall.

This is true regardless of gender, history of falls or nationality, and is the reason why older people often do not come into contact with falls prevention services - or find out how to prevent falls - until it is too late and they have already fallen and seriously injured themselves.

Local events offer a vital way of addressing these issues and bringing about the all-important behaviour change needed to prevent falls. In addition to raising awareness, they break down some of the common barriers to accessing falls prevention services or interventions, and provide opportunities for older people to act on the information they have received. They do this by enabling older people:

- to see the venue where regular classes take place.
- to meet the staff who run services or classes.
- to ask questions and raise concerns.
- to try out particular classes or services and see how it may benefit them.



Engaging with older people

Engaging with older people and presenting the topic of falls prevention in a way that they find acceptable is key to the success of falls awareness campaigning. Research into attitudes on falls prevention in later life shows that older people are more likely to be receptive to messages which focus on improving health, mobility and confidence, rather than the risk and consequences of falls. Strength and balance exercise, for example, is likely to be viewed positively, as something which can help to improve or maintain independence. Hazard reduction, on the other hand, may be regarded as something which restricts activity. It may also be seen as simple common sense and therefore come across as very patronising advice.

There are a number of things you can do when running campaign activities to help convey falls prevention advice in a positive and engaging way. Here are some examples:

Invite 'peers'

Older people who have already taken part in interventions and classes will be able to talk about the benefits they experienced and reassure your participants if they have any concerns.

Make it a social event

A cup of tea or coffee and a chance to socialise with others will attract people to your event, and a relaxed and friendly environment will encourage them to engage in the activities you are running.

Don't mention the f-word!

It sounds strange but you might not want to use the word 'falls' in the title of your event. If it's the first thing people hear, it might put them off, so again, think about selling the positive effects of falls prevention activities and classes when naming or promoting your event. Why not 'better balance', 'stay strong, stay steady' or 'health and happiness'? Once they are engaged in activities at your event you can be more open about the importance of preventing falls, and how this can contribute to a happiness and health.

Have fun!

If you are enjoying what you are doing, so will the people attending - and they'll be much more likely to remember the advice you gave. Perhaps think of including a game, a fun activity or a 'taster' exercise session to enhance participation.

Tailor your event

Building trust and respect with those you are working with is essential to effective engagement, and ensuring your audience acts upon the advice you are giving. Customs, cultures, religious beliefs and personal preferences all need to be taken into consideration when running events. This is especially important when it comes to the language and any images you use to describe and promote your event.

Get personal

Think about what will motivate the older people you are targeting and what they will relate to. If you are working with older men, for example, they may be more interested, and therefore more likely to attend, if the event has a focus on sport rather than dance or exercise. Can you invite a local or retired sportsman to talk about the benefits of keeping active, and complement this with a demonstration or taster session of strength and balance exercise?



How to run local events and activities

This section provides a checklist of practical considerations and questions you might want to think about when planning your activity or event.

1. What…?

What…kind of activities are you going to run?

Below are some examples of typical falls awareness activities to help get you started. You could pick one of these activities, or include a combination of them at your event.

Exercise sessions

There are lots of barriers to older people starting new exercise classes and programmes. Providing an opportunity for older participants to watch or try out falls prevention exercises for themselves – whether it's Tai Chi, strength and balance programmes (like OTAGO and FaME) or dancing - will help to overcome some of the most common fears that older people have when it comes to physical activity. It will also show that these exercises are appropriate for their age and ability.

Talks and presentations

There are many different topics you could cover if you are holding a talk. Keep it simple and relevant by focusing on the things that older people can do themselves to help reduce their risk of falls. For example:

- looking after feet
- having regular eye tests
- reporting dizziness, slips and trips to a doctor
- asking for a medicine review
- doing regular strength and balance exercises
- eating a balanced diet.

If you don't have the expertise to talk about these issues in detail, invite other professionals along to help.

Healthy eating or food demonstrations

Food demonstrations are a very popular way of engaging audiences at almost any event. Highlight risk factors for falls that can be related to diet and nutrition. For example, you could show how to maintain good bone health by making recipes with foods that contain calcium and vitamin D - or if you want to focus on eye health, recipes which contain vitamins A, C and E.

Be sure to choose recipes that are appropriate to the lifestyle and shopping habits of your participants so they can make them at home. For example, are the ingredients easily obtainable? Are they sold in small quantities for participants who live alone?

Health checks

These add an interactive element to your events and are a great way of engaging older people and opening up discussions about falls prevention. You could offer an eye test, a foot health check, balance or walking ability review or a blood pressure check. Offering advice and a review of walking aids is also very popular, and will provide very practical help with something that a lot of older people use every day but may be struggling with.

You may find through these checks that you identify a lot of problems that older people feel are not important enough to speak to a doctor about, (for example, continence issues), so be ready with details of local teams and services that you can refer participants on to.

Games and quizzes

Lots of things change about us as we grow older, but the desire to have fun isn't one of them! Keep it simple with something like a spot-the-difference game or a word puzzle, or if you have one available, use a games console and balance activity.

Introducing a theme, and varying it year to year, may also help you to think of new ideas for activities. Themes are a great way of focusing on particular risk factors, like medication, balance, vision, foot or bone health.

You'll find more ideas for activities, and details of the kinds of events that others have held, in the 'Event Examples' section.

What resources do you need to hold your event?

Once you've decided on the activities you'll be running, write a list of the resources that you will need to help you plan, set up and run your event on the day, including:

People

Do you need help from colleagues or members of staff from other organisations? Have you checked their availability? Is there someone who can stand in on the day if they are unable to attend?

Leaflets

Will you have something available that your participants can take home to read and refer to for further information and contact details? If you do not have any existing materials, check the ProFouND website to see if there are any general resources available in your language or ask other organisations in your area if they have any leaflets that you can order for your event.

If you are writing leaflets yourself, keep the information simple, and if possible, use images to explain what you are describing, especially if you are working with different cultural or ethnic groups, or older people living with dementia. Allow plenty of time to review what you've written, and if possible, test the messages and layout with your target audience first, to check it comes across in the way you intended.

Equipment

If you are planning to use any equipment, such as laptops, speakers and microphones, make sure you check everything beforehand and that anyone else involved in your event knows how to use it.

Refreshments

These are essential for any activity or event, whether it's keeping the staff happy or entertaining the participants!

2. Who...?

Who...is your audience?

It's a good idea to give some thought to this when planning the resources you will have available on the day, and the ways in which you want to promote your event. For example:

If your event is for other professionals, or for relatives or carers, you might want to emphasise the role they can play or how they can support older people to prevent falls.

If your event is for older people, do you need to tailor messages according to different types of 'faller'? For example, by highlighting the benefits of exercises like tai chi to those who may be at risk but who have not yet fallen, and the benefits of a tailored exercise programme like Otago or FaME to those who have.

Who...are you going to be working with?

If you're hosting a talk or information session why not ask professionals from other disciplines to come along? For example, a community pharmacist, who could talk about the importance of regular medicine reviews and the kinds of medications that may cause dizziness. Or you could ask to hold your event within their pharmacy.

See the 'Working in Partnership' section for a list of other types of organisations and professionals who might be able to help you.

3. Where and when...?

Where...will you hold your event?

There are advantages to holding an event or activity in venues that are familiar to your target audience or places where they already meet: they are likely to feel at ease and be more willing to take part, and you won't have to worry about how they will get to and from your venue. Places to consider include:

- social clubs
- church halls

- pharmacies
- care homes
- waiting rooms in hospitals or doctor's surgeries
- public spaces, like town squares and parks
- markets and shopping areas.

If you are running an event for professionals, why not host something in the cafeteria or canteen at lunchtime when they have a bit of time to spare?

If you are running your activity within your own setting, it's a good idea to think about how and where you will promote your event, and also how your audience will get to and from the venue.

When...will you hold your event?

What time of day and time of year do you want to run your activity? If you are not tying in with a particular campaign day or week (e.g. International Older People's Day), think about what might work best for your target audience. For example, if you are aiming to reach older people during the winter time, a morning activity or event might be better if it's going to be dark outside in the afternoon.

4. How?

How...are you going to promote it?

Local newspapers, radio stations and places where older people meet and socialise, such as cafes and churches, are all good places to start. Ask colleagues, other partners and contacts if they have ideas of where to display information and how to attract participants to your event.

Working in partnership

Falls are complex and multi-factorial. As such, there are a wide range of professionals who get involved in the assessment and treatment of falls and fall-related injuries. There are even more who can play a part in helping to prevent them - anyone who works with or comes into contact with older people can hold or promote a falls awareness campaign activity or event, or simply help to communicate messages about falls.

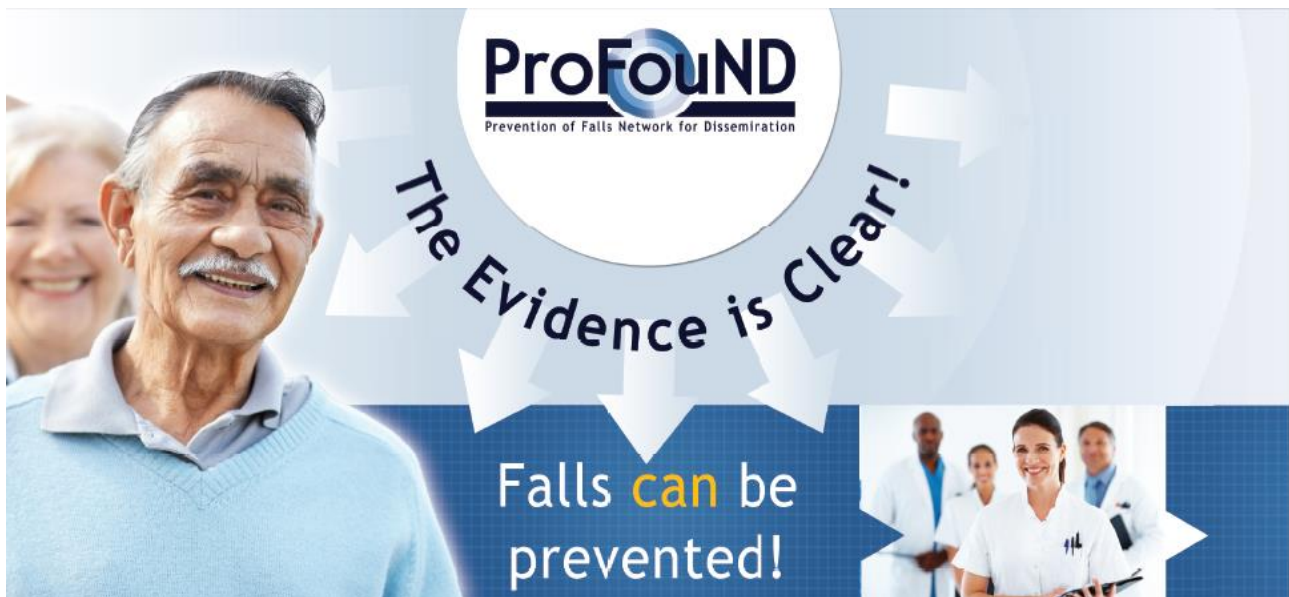
Many local governments and authorities have responded to the growing problem and cost of falls by creating a dedicated team or department with responsibility for reducing falls and fall-related injuries within the local population. These departments may take a lead in falls awareness campaign activities, or be able to support you with expertise and resources, so are a good place to start if you're thinking about working in partnership to hold an event.

Below are some examples of other types of professionals and organisations that typically get involved in falls awareness campaigning. There may be others in your locality, depending on what is available and how services are structured. You may want to write a list of people to contact, or ask other partners for suggestions, before you start planning your activity.

- Physiotherapists
- Occupational therapists
- Exercise instructors
- Public health professionals
- Health providers and insurance companies
- Nurses (e.g. community, rehabilitation)
- Ambulance services
- Opticians
- Pharmacists

- Doctors (e.g. physicians or General Practitioners)
- Carers from social and support services
- Care home managers and staff
- Local charities or not-for-profit organisations.

There are many benefits to working in partnership. Not only will it help to maximise what you are able to offer at your event in terms of activities, advice, information and resources, but you may find this also leads to new projects or ongoing partnership working.



Event examples

The following are examples from events that were held in the UK and Sweden during Falls Awareness Week 2013. They demonstrate different ways to highlight a particular topic, (in this case feet and falls, which was the theme for Falls Awareness Week that year), and give ideas on tailoring activities to suit the target audience, whether this is care home residents, community-dwelling older adults or younger relatives and carers.

Foot pamper day in care home

In East London, one care home ran a foot pampering day and provided a foot spa and foot massage for residents. Shoe fittings were also carried out and several residents were found to be wearing shoes that were too small and too narrow. The care home manager reported:

“We don’t usually run any activities to promote falls prevention, but it was easy to organise the pampering sessions, and our residents were really happy to listen to advice about how to prevent falls while they relaxed and enjoyed a foot massage.

A lot of them told me how much they appreciated the event. Foot care is really important to them, but most of them don’t have the flexibility to bend down and look after their own feet any more. The pampering encouraged them to open up and talk about their own experiences of falls, so we went on to talk about some other risk factors that might be causing them to fall, like vision and balance”.

'Best Foot Forward' in local town centre

Age UK Richmond, an independent local charity which provides services for older people in the borough of Richmond, came up with an innovative way of drawing attention to the issue of feet and falls by setting up a flash mob. They choreographed a dance routine, which was carried out in the busy town centre, and made to seem like a spontaneous act. The dance began with just one person, and this gradually increased until there were around 30 dancers. By the end, the dance had gathered a large crowd of curious bystanders, who were all desperate to find out what they'd just witnessed and what it was in aid of.

Watch Age UK Richmond's Best Foot Forward flashmob at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Am2RL-8ZVzq.

Fall Int! started out as a regional falls awareness campaign in 2013 in Västerbotten, Sweden. It was organised to respond to the disproportionately high levels of falls and fall-related injuries that had occurred for several years in the region. Around 125 events were held in total; some involved just a single organisation and focused primarily on medication, which was the theme for the campaign that year. One example of this is the pharmacy chain Kronans droghandel, which handed out bags containing information about falls prevention to everyone over 65 who picked out prescriptions at the pharmacy during the Falls Int campaign week. Other events, like the one outlined below, involved multi-disciplinary teams, who worked together to highlight a range of risk factors.

Multi-agency event in community hall

In Nordmaling, a group of health professionals ran a multi-agency event to promote the different services available in the municipality, and to provide information on the things that local older people can do themselves to prevent falls, whether they are living independently at home or in other types of lodging. The event ran at a local community hall, where staff gave advice on the following risk factors and support services:

Environment - *an occupational therapist demonstrated how to adapt the housing environment to prevent falls.*

Visual impairment - *a local optician spoke about the importance of regular eye examinations.*

Footwear - *a local shoe store promoted the ultimate winter boot, 'IceBub', as well as slippers and anti-slip socks that can help to prevent falls.*

Risk assessments - *nurses working within local nursing homes offered a falls risk assessment, which includes malnutrition, risk of bad oral health and risk of pressured ulcers.*

Help at home - *an assistance officer gave information about the support that is available for older people living independently.*

Nutrition - *staff from a local nursing home displayed various options of home cooking and food delivery available in Nordmaling.*

Measuring success

We will never be able to prove that any falls awareness campaign activity has prevented a fall - the same is true of some falls prevention interventions themselves. However, there are many ways to measure the success of your event and prove that it has had a positive impact.

Behaviour change

If you do decide to evaluate your event, it is important to assess how your activities may have contributed to a change in the attitudes and behaviour of the people who attended. You can do this by asking about awareness levels, confidence, and most importantly, what they will do differently as a result of attending.

The most obvious way is through a questionnaire, but keep it simple - it doesn't have to be a validated quality of life tool - and the easier it is to understand and complete, the more responses you will get. You could even make it a verbal rather than written questionnaire. For example, if you are holding a presentation, ask participants to answer a question with a show of hands, and make a note of their responses.

Below are some suggested questions which can be used to assess awareness levels, confidence and behaviour change.

- On a scale of 1-5, how much did you know about preventing falls before today's event? (1 = nothing; 5 = a lot)
- On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you feel about reducing your risk of falls after today's event? (1 = not at all confident; 5 = very confident)
- Are you considering doing any of the following after attending this event:
 - Visiting your GP/doctor to talk about falls?
 - Having an eye test?
 - Starting an exercise class or programme?
 - Telling a friend about what I have learnt?
 - Seeing a podiatrist or chiropodist?
 - Can you list two things you can do to reduce your risk of falls?

Reach and referrals

If you undertake any health checks or provide any referrals during your event, make a record of this, as well as anything that happens as a result. For example, if you are carrying out out blood pressure checks, report on how many you undertake, as well as the number of cases where postural hypertension is found; or for balance checks, give the number of cases where balance impairment is found, as well as the number of referrals that are made to an exercise class or programme.

Keep track of the overall number of people who attend your event. You can compare this with the numbers of referrals made, or health checks undertaken, to give a percentage of the number of people you helped.

Quotes and testimonials

It's a good idea to ask for feedback on your event, as well as any leaflets you provided, to help you understand what worked well and how you can improve things if you plan to run your event again.

You can include space for comments and general feedback within evaluation forms, or alternatively, take a more informal approach and leave out a book for attendees to write their comments in. Some people may be encouraged to leave feedback by seeing what others have written.

You can anonymise quotes and use them to promote your service or class to other older people - or keep them for funding bids and grant applications. Showing first-hand comments will really support your case.



Planning checklist

- **Confirm the date and venue**

Are there any other events going on locally that clash with the date and mean that people do not turn up to your activities?

- **Identify partner organisations**

Is there anyone who can help you to promote your event or run activities with you on the day?

- **Draft promotional materials**

Remember to include the date, time, venue and directions.

- **Organise resources**

There are lots of different types of resources you might need for your event, including leaflets, evaluation forms, equipment, prizes and refreshments.

- **Plan your evaluation**

If you want to evaluate your event, make time to plan how you will do this at the same time as planning your event. You could ask your participants to complete a short questionnaire, or count the number of referrals you made during the event.



Top tips

Here are a few tips to help you plan and run your falls awareness campaign activity:

- Allow plenty of time for planning, communicating and setting up partnerships, and get your event in the diary and on the agenda as soon as you can.
- Be creative and talk to others about your ideas. You might surprise yourself with what you come up with.
- Introduce older people to the topic - you don't have to cover every risk factor in one go.
- Demonstrate if you can - give attendees a chance to see what services and classes involve for themselves. They will feel much more confident about attending regularly if they can meet instructors and see venues at your event.
- Provide freebies or 'giveaways' if you can, even if it's just a bag with information leaflets or a free pen! Local businesses might provide small products or a prize for you to give away.
- Provide refreshments and allow time for participants to socialise.
- Think carefully if you are using images for posters and display materials, and select ones that your target audience will relate to. Will they appeal to both older men and women? Do you need to include people from particular ethnic or cultural backgrounds?
- Last but not least: have fun!

Resources

You will find a number of resources, as well as leaflets for older people, exercise guides and videos in a range of languages, to help you plan and run events in the 'Resources' section on the ProFouND website.

These may be useful to display and hand out, particularly if you do not currently have any of your own materials.

As resources are continually being added to the ProFouND website, we have not provided an extensive list here; instead we recommend using the filter function and searching with keywords including: 'Awareness', 'Education', 'Leaflet' and 'Exercise'.

Below are a few recommendations to give you an example of what is available. You may find these particularly useful for planning. You can find these documents by entering 'Falls Awareness Week' in the search box:

- **Falls Awareness Week Action Pack** - this guide contains examples of events that have been held in the UK, as well as a word search and 'wrong glasses' activity, which can be printed and used at local events.
- **Feet and Falls** - this booklet contains ideas for holding events with a focus on feet, along with information on the links between feet and falls, tips on safe footwear and examples of foot and ankle exercises to improve balance.
- **Boost Your bones** - this leaflet includes a quiz and fact sheet, which can be used at events and handed out to older people.
- **Watch Your Step** - this action pack was produced to provide information about the links between vision and falls and examples of events that can help to highlight vision as a risk factor for falls.

Many of these resources are also available on the Age UK website at:

www.ageuk.org.uk/professional-resources-home/services-and-practice/health-and-wellbeing/falls-awareness-week-18-22-june-2012/.

If you are planning on running an event with a focus on feet, vision or bone health, or you'd like to find out more about preventing falls among older people living with dementia, you may also find it useful to listen to the range of Age UK Falls Awareness Week webinars. These can be found at:

www.ageuk.org.uk/professional-resources-home/services-and-practice/health-and-wellbeing/falls-awareness-week-18-22-june-2012/falls-webinar1.



Other useful resources from international falls awareness campaigns

April Falls Day, Australia

The NSW Falls Prevention Network runs April Falls Day on 1 April every year and provides a number of resources for those working in hospitals and in the community. Many of these are available in range of languages. Visit the website to find out more and download materials: <http://fallsnetwork.neura.edu.au>.

Falls Prevention Awareness Day, USA

Falls Prevention Awareness Day, led by the National Council on Aging, is run every year in September. You will find tools to help you run events, along with examples of campaign activities at: www.ncoa.org/improve-health/center-for-healthy-aging/falls-prevention/falls-prevention-awareness.html.

Fall Int! Sweden

Sweden's first falls awareness campaign took place in the region of Västerbotten in 2013. The website contains a range of Swedish resources, as well as information about events: www.fallint.se.

Falls Leaflets for Older People in different languages

Visit <http://profound.eu.com/category/resources/> and filter by language and resource.



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