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OU Nursing professors earn grant to develop fall prevention program for older Arab Americans

The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation has awarded \$35,000 to professors Lan Yao, Ph.D., R.N. and Suha Kridli, Ph.D., R.N. from the Oakland University School of Nursing to develop a Tai Chi program to help prevent falls in the Arab-American elderly population.

Professor Yao researches Tai Chi's effectiveness in improving frailty in at-risk older adults while professor Kridli studies health beliefs and practices prevalent in Middle Eastern populations.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults. The significance of falls and the use of Tai Chi is well-supported for the general elderly population. For this project, Drs. Yao and Kridli will team up with human services organization Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) to translate a fall-prevention exercise program to Arab Americans and evaluate the program's accessibility, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance, with specific attention to key factors related to implementation.



The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation has awarded \$35,000 to two School of Nursing professors to develop a Tai Chi program to help prevent falls in Arab-American elderly population.

“According to CDC, costs for falls to Medicare alone totaled over \$31 billion in 2015. Many fallers fear of another fall thus results in loss of confidence and self-imposed restriction of activities. Falls also contribute to caregiver burden, impede the caregiver's ability to undertake activities of daily living, and increase caregiver stress,” said professor Yao. “As the state of Michigan experiences considerable growth in its older population including older Arab Americans, the rising number of falls and the costs to manage fall injuries underscore the need for dissemination and implementation of cost-effective fall prevention interventions.”

Metropolitan Detroit has the largest concentration of Arabs in the world outside of the Middle East while Arab-Americans are the third largest ethnic population in the state.

The Tai Chi classes will be taught in a culturally sensitive manner at ACCESS, where Arab-Americans gather to socialize.

The researchers believe that making the program culturally specific is the key to success.

“Certain health-related interventions that work with one population don't work with another without adjustments for cultures, beliefs, and other factors,” Kridli said. “We think that combining the effectiveness of Tai Chi for fall prevention with cultural sensitivity could have a positive impact on this underserved population.”

The research team will begin implementing this two-year program this fall.



Suha Kridli, Ph.D., R.N. Lan Yao, Ph.D., R.N.