

## Stepping in to prevent falls, Victorian occupational therapist a finalist in national primary health care awards

Today, HESTA announced Megan Swann as an Individual Distinction finalist in the 2015 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards, for her work in reducing preventable falls in older people.

Ms Swann, an occupational therapist who co-developed, co-authored and implemented Stepping On, a fall prevention program, said she recognised the need for the program 15 years ago and has successfully supported the program through her working career over many private and public health agencies.

“Stepping On is a program that covers a range of topics, including vision, home hazards, medicines and practical exercises to improve strength and balance, and can also increase a person’s confidence”, said Ms Swann.

“Designed for people over the age of 65, it’s suitable for those who are community dwelling and have had a previous fall or are fearful of falling.

“Using adult education principles, the program builds older adults’ confidence in their ability to reduce falls and delivers a 31% reduction in falls over 14 months.

“The program was a collaboration between Prof Lindy Clemson (then Dr Clemson), where we conducted a controlled trial before delivering the program and I’m still actively engaged in rolling it out across NSW.

“Working in aged rehabilitation I saw many patients, who after a fall, seemed frailer and often more likely to fall again. The program significantly changed people’s lives and noticeably decreased the cycle of frailty.

“Initially the program encountered resistance among health professionals — as we were introducing new cognitive behavioural techniques — but through the support of academic partnerships we developed training manuals and the program took off.”

Stepping On has been translated into 17 languages and has been supported by Ministry of Health NSW for seven years. It is endorsed in North America and is also being delivered in 23 states of the USA.

The HESTA Primary Health Care Awards recognise the dedication and professionalism of those working at the frontline of health care, including physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, GPs, rehabilitation professionals, health educators and medical practice managers.

Winners will be announced at the Awards dinner in Melbourne on Tuesday, 10 November.

The Individual Distinction and Young Leader Award winners will each receive a \$5,000 **ME** EveryDay transaction account and \$5,000 towards further education. The Team Excellence Award winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant.

For more information visit [hestaawards.com.au](http://hestaawards.com.au)

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*The HESTA Primary Health Care Awards is a HESTA initiative, proudly sponsored by the bank owned by industry super funds, ME.*

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