

Giving Back

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Summary: Brain Gym Mentoring Program (BGMP) improves lower and upper body strength, aerobic endurance, lower and upper body flexibility, agility and dynamic balance in Older Adults.

The Brain Gym exercise program was modified and piloted in elderly who attend a senior center on Maui. The Hawaii Dept of Health's Maui office was asked to evaluate the program as close as possible to a cost-benefit format. While there is currently no efficacy data (health cost aversion) for Brain Gym another exercise program for elderly Enhanced Fitness shows a 20% reduction in medical costs for participants who meet a minimum criteria of attendance. Using standardized fitness tests as a surrogate marker we showed that Brain Gym is at least as efficacious as EF. We assumed that comparability of fitness markers imply similar averted health costs. Using the observed 76% attendance rate and the annual program cost of \$28650 for 38 participants, the annual investment to return ratio was 1:3.4.

The most notable findings were:

- Increases in the ability of participants to move from sitting to standing than before BGMP.
- Increases in the ability of participants to march in place raising the knees to a required height than before BGMP.
- Improvements in the ability to stretch and reach the toes.
- Improvement in ability to reach and touch finger tips behind the back.
- Improvement in the ability to do bicep curls than before BGMP.
- Improvement in the ability to get up from a seated position, walk, turn and return to start.

The Brain Gym Mentoring Program was implemented by Giving Back, a non-profit organization on Maui whose vision is unite the strengths of trained elder mentors and frail elders to improve each other's strength, flexibility, endurance, balance, coordination, self-esteem, self-efficacy and emotional well-being. BGMP was designed specifically to improve physical well-being and cognitive functioning among our elders and to enhance their independence and self-sufficiency in the Maui community

For more information about the BGMP, please visit the Giving Back website at:

www.GivingBackMentoring.org

Dr. Lorrin Pang, the independent evaluator of the BGPM, is the Director of the Maui District Health Office. Injury Prevention and Control Program of the Hawaii State Department of Health requested the evaluation. The full 7-page evaluation is available.

