

Fall prevention online

Our population is becoming older and although it remains relatively independent there is greater need for successful injury prevention strategies for those in this group. It is reasonable, therefore, to consider the implications of older adult falls and how to best identify and manage those at risk.

'Hospitalisations and mortality rates from falls rise exponentially after age 65 years and are at the highest rate for the oldest old age group (those over age 85 years – American Geriatrics Society, British Geriatrics Society et al. 2001; Gillespie, Gillespie et al. 2003). Women sustain about twice as many falls as men. Available information about the impact of falls on quality of life and functional status underestimates the complete picture of disability related to falls.' – From the CME falls web pages.

Research has produced successful interventions such as the Otago Exercise Programme, multi-factorial approaches and home safety assessments that can be used as tools in preventing and managing falls.

But a recent survey by ACC of 148 physicians highlighted the need for more accurate information on falls prevention. The survey included questions on treatment and management strategies and although 85% agreed falls are preventable, less than half (41%) of the questions were answered correctly when compared with current literature evidence.

With multiple risk factors associated with falls, comprehensive assessment of those at risk calls for evidence-based clinical evaluation skills and information about fall management.

The fall prevention pages of the CME website provide a valuable resource that meets these needs. The CME website has information on risk factors, types of falls, fall evaluations, fall prevention and the fear of falling.

Dr Ngaire Kerse (Director of Research, The Goodfellow Unit, Department of General Practice & Primary Health Care, The University of Auckland) and Dennis Kerins (creator of the CME website) have produced an invaluable tool for physicians. A mini-course, which qualifies for MOPs/AVE points, is also available on the site.

To explore case studies (and find out how 'Gladys' gets on with recovering from a fracture-producing fall) and search the latest evidence-based material on falls management visit www.cmeclub.auckland.ac.nz.

ACC funds and supports the development of this new resource for physicians and encourages you to visit the site. For information regarding ACC funded fall prevention initiatives such as modified Tai Chi and The Otago Exercise Programme, please visit www.acc.co.nz

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