

Nursing Home Falls: A Local Perspective

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Abstract

Introduction: This study aims to examine the demography of falls, factors that contribute to falls and fall risk factors in residents of a nursing home for the elderly in Singapore. **Materials and Methods:** An 18-month follow-up study was carried out on 95 nursing home residents. Information on the subjects' potential risk factors for falls was obtained through a review of their casenotes and physical examination. At the end of the study period, the casenotes were reviewed for any documented fall, the circumstances surrounding each fall and whether complications resulted from the fall. The likely factors and events associated with each fall were categorised where possible. Logistic regression was performed to determine the risk factors for falls. Subjects who died or were discharged during the study were included in the analysis. **Results:** Several subjects (72.6%) were ≥ 75 years old, required assistance in activities of daily living (71.6%), cognitively impaired (52.6%), diagnosed with mental illness (49.5%) and non-ambulant (43.2%). A total of 63 falls contributed by 38 (40%) subjects were documented over 18 months, giving an incidence of 0.5 fall per bed year. Thirteen (20.6%) injuries resulted from the falls, of which 3 were fractures. Falls associated with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors were identified in 38.1% of falls. The most common intrinsic factors were gait disorders (31.7%) and confusion/difficult behaviour (31.7%). Contributory extrinsic factors include wheelchair/commode (22.2%) and bathroom-related (15.9%) incidents. Most falls occurred during ambulation (31.7%) and transfers (17.5%). On multivariate logistic regression, the only significant risk factors for falls were "need for ambulatory aids" (odds ratio, 24.4) and "cognitive impairment" (odds ratio, 8.1). **Conclusion:** The study confirms that falls are common amongst elderly in a local nursing home. Residents with gait instability and behavioural problems due to underlying dementia or mental illnesses are most at risk. Extrinsic factors, such as bathroom activities and the use of wheelchair/commodes, are contributory. Thus, falls reduction protocols in nursing homes should include behavioural measures, enhanced care practices and environmental modifications to be effective.

Ann Acad Med Singapore 2003; 32:795-800

Key words: Dementia, Elderly, Gait disorders

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