

**NSW Falls Injury
Prevention
Network**

FALLS LINKS

**Volume 1 Issue 1
January/February
2006**

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WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of the newsletter of our network to be published every 2 months. There will be a feature topic in each issue, including a review of the literature and references. In addition a list of recent helpful publications will also be included as well as information on upcoming meetings and conferences.

The Network is entering a new phase with the NSW Falls Program being led by Lorraine Lovitt and the appointment of NSW Area Health Service Falls Co- coordinators. The network is currently hosted at the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute (POWMRI) with the oversight of Associate Professor Stephen Lord and Dr Jacqui Close, both highly experienced researchers/clinicians in the field of falls prevention. Esther Vance is the recently appointed Project Officer for the network.

NSW Health Falls Policy Implementation

Ms Lorraine Lovitt has been appointed to the Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC) to provide state-wide co-ordination and support to Area Health Services (AHS) in the implementation of their falls plans. The responsibility for the implementation of the NSW Falls Policy is shared by agreement, with the Injury Prevention Policy Branch, NSW Health and the CEC.

All AHSs have completed an Area Falls plan which will form the basis for the implementation of the NSW Falls policy in each Area.



Lorraine Lovitt

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which provides details of the agreement and funding allocation to AHSs, between the Injury Prevention Policy Branch and the CEC is being completed with Area Chief Executives.

Each AHS has received \$120,000 recurrent funding to appoint an Area Falls Coordinator. This role will be to co-ordinate the implementation of the falls policy across the acute, community and residential care sectors and will be supported by an Area Falls Management Committee.

Lorraine may be contacted by phone: 9382 7661 or 0422 002 091 or by email at lorraine.lovitt@cec.health.nsw.gov.au

NEW WEBSITE COMING

The current NSW Falls Injury Prevention Network website at NSW Health will be updated and hosted at POWMRI. This newsletter will also be accessible on the new website. Until this new website is launched the current website can be accessed at http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/falls_prevention/index.html

MEET THE TEAM



Dr Jacqui Close

Welcome to what we hope will be a bimonthly medley of information from all areas of falls and fracture prevention. Let me first introduce myself. I am Jacqui Close and am a clinician and academic with an interest in falls and fractures in older people. I arrived from the UK in June of 2005 where my research activities and clinical practice centred around preventative strategies for falls and fractures. I now work as a geriatrician at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney where I have just started a Falls Clinic with colleagues from Allied Health. My academic base is at the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute.

Over the coming months we hope to have a theme to each of the newsletters which will combine the basic science with clinical practice and practical tips on “how to do it”. The literature on falls and fall related injury is vast and makes challenging reading even for those whose life is dominated by this area. We hope to be able to review areas of common interest and synthesize the evidence in a manner that has a meaningful interpretation for those trying to prevent older people from falling.

Needless to say the work in producing themed newsletters is significant and we hope to avail ourselves of the wealth of expertise that already exists in NSW with guest writers for different topics.

Topics likely to be covered over the coming year include:

- Screening for high risk populations
- Use of risk assessment tools – hospitals, Aged Care Facilities and the Community
- Medication review in the older at risk person
- Approaches to exercise in preventing falls
- The role of calcium and vitamin D in falls prevention
- Hip protectors
- Interventions to prevent falls in the visually impaired
- Falls and fractures in the cognitively impaired person
- Evidence based summary of falls prevention strategies in different settings.

We'll kick off in the next issue with a summary of the evidence for preventing falls in the hospital setting with a review of the existing literature. People may have other ideas as to key and important topics they would like to see covered in the newsletter. Continued input, support and feedback on the content of the newsletter is the only way we can shape this into something that is useful for its readers.

All suggestions are greatly received and please do forward all ideas to Esther. I look forward to meeting many of you over the coming months and years.

Stephen Lord

Preventing falls and harm from falls in older people. Best practice guidelines for Australian hospitals and residential aged care facilities

Stephen Lord, Chair, Expert Panel, Safety and Quality Council Falls Prevention Project



Falls and fall-related injury are significant problems in Australian hospitals and residential aged care facilities. In the sub-acute or rehabilitation hospital setting, over 40 per cent of patients with specific clinical problems, such as stroke, experience one or more falls during their admission.¹ Injuries result from approximately 30 per cent of such falls.²

Fall rates in residential aged care facilities have been described as anything from 4 to 10 per 1000 resident bed days^{3,4} and there have also been descriptions of anything from one-to-five falls per resident per annum. Up to 50 per cent of residents experience one or more falls in a 12-month period

While falls are complex incidents caused by multiple risk factors, evidence indicates that there are interventions which minimise both the risk of falling and the severity of injuries.

In August 2005, the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care launched new evidence-based guidelines, entitled *Preventing falls and harm from falls in older people. Best practice guidelines for Australian hospitals and residential aged care facilities*. The Guidelines are based on best practice approaches, latest literature, expert opinion and an Australia wide consultation process. They are designed to inform clinical practice and assist hospitals and residential aged care facilities to develop and implement fall prevention strategies.

The Guidelines and support materials (which include a quick reference guide, implementation guide, short film, fact sheets, poster, indigenous resource and consumer brochures) will be distributed to hospitals and residential aged care facilities.

Further information on the Guidelines is available at www.safetyandquality.org (these are found under publications, need to scroll down this page to find the guidelines as PDF files).

Snapshot - What's in the Guidelines

Standard fall-prevention strategies

To prevent falls and improve the safety and quality of care, a range of standard precautionary strategies can be implemented for all older people both when they arrive and during their stay at a hospital or a residential aged care facility. This approach is based on good gerontological practice and the presumption that all older people in these settings are at risk of falling, with their level of risk requiring further assessment.

Fall and Injury Prevention Interventions

Recommendations are made for balance, continence, cognitive impairment, feet and footwear, syncope and dizziness, medications, vision, the environment, surveillance and observation, as well as restraints. The injury prevention section makes recommendations in the areas of hip protectors, vitamin D and calcium supplementation.

References

1. National Ageing and Research Institute. *An analysis of research on preventing falls and falls injury in older people: community, residential care and hospital settings* (2004 update). Report to the Australian Government, Department of Health and Ageing, Injury Prevention Section. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2004.
2. Oliver D. Prevention of falls in hospital inpatients. *Agendas for research and practice*. *Age and Ageing* 2004; 33: 328–30
3. Rubenstein L, Josephson K, Osteweil D. Falls and fall prevention in the nursing home. *Clinics in Geriatric Medicine* 1996; 12(4): 881–902.
4. Morse J. *Preventing patient falls*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.

Esther Vance



Welcome to our newsletter, I'm Esther Vance the Project Officer for the NSW Falls Injury Prevention Network. I have a background in Public Health working mainly in the area of immunization and infectious diseases. Currently I'm in the middle of a Library and Information Management course in which I have been acquiring skills to enable me to search for and store relevant literature.

I am the contact point for the Falls Network and will also be involved in the production of this newsletter, the organization of the Falls Network Meetings and redesigning the Falls Network website.

Another of my roles is to search the current literature and the SafetyLit and ProFaNE (Prevention of Falls network Europe) reports each week for articles relevant to the network. These will also be added to a database under specific headings so that they

can be available when required. Useful references will be posted to the network listserv and will also be included in this newsletter.

Please do not hesitate to contact me regarding the network or the newsletter. Suggestions for issues to be covered in the newsletter are very welcome. You can contact me at e.vance@unsw.edu.au. I work 2 days per week so e-mail is the best mechanism to contact me.

NEW BOOKS

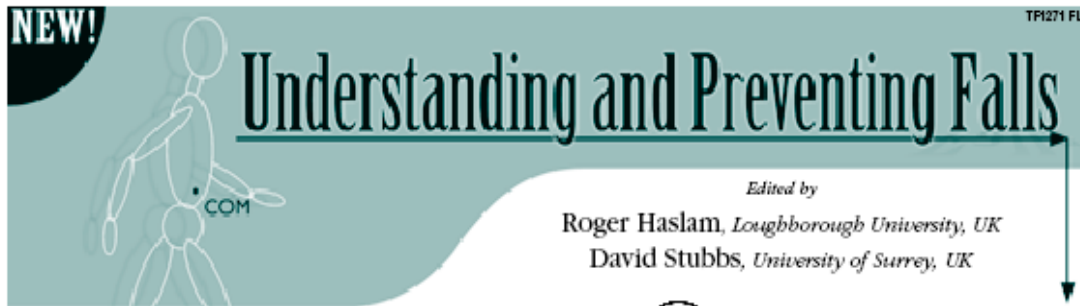
***Gait Disorders: Evaluation and Management*, edited by Jeffrey M. Hausdorff and Neil B. Alexander, 2005.**

Published by Taylor and Francis.

With chapters by many of the foremost international authorities on aging, neurology, physical therapy and rehabilitation, this reference provides an up-to-date review of approaches to gait disorders and falls. Presenting the fundamental concepts of gait, it describes the changes in mobility with aging and disease and focuses on recent assessment and intervention practices for common gait disorders, especially those seen in older adults. With sections on neuro-psychological influences, fear of falling and exercise, this valuable resource also includes strategies for specific disease groups, such as patients with neurological disorders or those recovering from stroke or hip surgery. Describing a wide range of assessment tools, diagnostic evaluation strategies, and clinical approaches to gait, *Gait Disorders: Evaluation and Management*:

- * introduces a new classification scheme to encompass the full range of mobility capacity in all older adults
- * reviews the physiology and biomechanics of gait and common gait disorders
- * covers cognitive and behavioral influences on gait and falling
- * describes methods for analyzing gait in the clinic and laboratory
- * details clinical and evidence-based methods for gait disorder and fall analysis, as well as techniques for gait optimization in patients with neurological disorders, foot and ankle injury, and those recovering from hip surgery.

NEW BOOKS



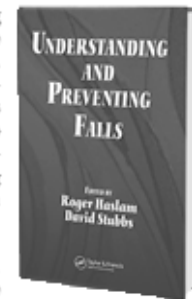
Edited by

Roger Haslam, *Loughborough University, UK*
David Stubbs, *University of Surrey, UK*

CRC CRC Press
Taylor & Francis Group

A unique resource containing a wide range of information

Readable and authoritative, **Understanding and Preventing Falls** provides a guide to the nature and extent of the problem of falls. Drawing on the latest research, the authors outline the combination of environmental factors that commonly lead to falls and explore how to prevent them. The case is made for a multifaceted approach to falls prevention, taking account of the complex interplay that exists between individuals and the environment.



Broad in scope, the book is divided into two parts. The first part examines the current state of knowledge and understanding of the causes and prevention of falls, with chapters on human ambulation and balance on level surfaces and on steps and stairs followed by chapters exploring vision and the effects of aging. Rounding out the coverage, the second part contains a series of case studies illustrating how falls occur in different circumstances and varying approaches to their prevention.

While there have been reductions in the number and severity of injuries from other causes over recent decades, the incidence of injuries from falling has remained consistently high. However, many falls are preventable. This unique resource supplies a concise overview of how to minimize the occurrences of slips, trips, and falls in a variety of situations and conditions.

Features

- ▶ Provides a detailed account of the characteristics of human gait and foot-floor interaction
- ▶ Discusses the circumstances surrounding falls on steps and stairs
- ▶ Delineates the important role vision plays in traversing our surroundings
- ▶ Explores the causes of falls and approaches to their prevention among older people
- ▶ Examines approaches to investigating falls at both the population and individual level
- ▶ Summarizes the wide-ranging causes of falls and approaches to their prevention

Contents

INTRODUCTION, *R. Haslam and D. Stubbs*

Background
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WALKING ON THE LEVEL: FOOTWEAR AND THE WALKING SURFACE, *R. Grönqvist*

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Walking on the Level
Biomechanics of Slips, Trips, and Falls
Frictional Mechanisms in Walking
Basic Safety Criteria for Walking
Methods for Slipperiness Measurement
Implications for Falling Accidents and Guidance for Prevention
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STEPS AND STAIRS, *M. Roys*

Introduction
The Extent of the Problem
Gait on Stairs
Inconsistent Step Dimensions
Inappropriate Step Sizes
Inadequate Handrails
Poor Step Visibility
Conclusions
References

ROLE OF VISION IN FALLS, *P. Howarth*

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Vision and Conspicuity
Visual Ability
Static and Dynamic Situations
Behaviour and the Environment
Interaction between the Visual and Vestibular Systems
Summary
References

See reverse for continuation of contents and ordering information

Catalog no. TF1271, January 2006, 272 pp.

ISBN: 0-4152-5636-4, \$99.95 / £56.99

CONFERENCES



It is my pleasure to invite you to attend the second Australian Falls Prevention Conference, to be held at the Sofitel Hotel, Brisbane, Queensland. The conference will address the important issue of falls in older people with a major emphasis on...

"Preventing falls in at-risk groups"

The conference includes 7 keynote speakers from Australia and abroad, free papers, poster sessions, workshops, roundtable discussions and trade exhibitions.

The Organising Committee looks forward to welcoming you to Brisbane.

Graham Kerr,
Conference Host.

session themes

- Vision Impairment
- Cognitive Impairment
- Parkinson's Disease
- Understanding Balance
- Falls risk assessment
- Exercise programs
- Compliance issues
- Fracture prevention
- Falls prevention initiatives
- Falls policy development



POPI
Prevention of Older
People's Injuries



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

important dates

- Call for abstracts.....10th February 2006
- Registration open.....27th February 2006
- Abstract deadline.....30th June 2006
- Notification of acceptance.....1st September 2006
- Early registration deadline.....15th September 2006

invited speakers

- Lindy Clemson (Sydney, Australia) 'Occupational interventions for the prevention of falls'.
- Bob Cumming (Sydney, Australia) 'Interventions for preventing falls in hospitals'.
- Stephen Lord (Sydney, Australia) 'Overview of 50 RCTs on exercise for falls prevention'.
- John Wark (Melbourne, Australia) 'An update of fracture prevention strategies'.
- Graham Kerr (Brisbane, Australia) 'Falls prevention strategies for people with Parkinson's disease'.
- Clare Robertson (Dunedin, NZ) 'Falls prevention strategies for people with visual impairment'.
- Jacqui Close (Sydney, Australia) 'Falls prevention strategies for people with cognitive impairments'.

Organising Committee

G Kerr, J Wood, S Morrison, S Brauer, J Nitz
N Peel, M Bourke, P Vardon, R O'Keefe

Scientific Committee

G Kerr, J Wood, S Morrison, S Lord, J Close, R Fitzpatrick, C Sherrington, L Day
J Steele, B Cumming, I Cameron, H Menz, K Hill, L Clemson, C Vogler, D Sturmeiks

website: www.powmri.edu.au/AFP2006

email: to be advised

NSW FALLS INJURY PREVENTION NETWORK

For information, suggestions and ideas regarding the network or this newsletter, contact Esther Vance at e.vance@unsw.edu.au

www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/falls_prevention/index.html

NSW FALLS INJURY PREVENTION NETWORK BACK-GROUND

The NSW Falls Injury prevention network has existed since 1993. The role of this network has grown since its inception and now includes:

- Meetings for discussion of falls related issues;
- Dissemination of research findings both local and international;
- Sharing resources developed and exploration of opportunities to combine resources in joint initiatives;
- Encouragement of collaborative projects and research;
- To act as a lobby group to influence policy;
- To liaise with NSW Health to provide information on current State/ Commonwealth issues in relation to falls and
- Maintenance of resources pertinent to the field

The main purpose of the network is to share knowledge, expertise, and resources on falls injury prevention for older people.

'The NSW Falls Injury Prevention Network activities are part of the implementation of the NSW Falls Policy funded by NSW Health

UPCOMING

CONFERENCES/ MEETINGS

FALLS NETWORK MEETING , MAY 2006, Sydney– more details soon.

JOINING THE NETWORK

To join the NSW Falls Injury Prevention Network listserv :

- Send an email to : majordomo@lists.health.nsw.gov.au
- In the body of the message type **subscribe nsw-falls-network**
- Do not put anything in the subject line
- Do not put anything else in the body of the message including your signature. If your signature is automatically added every time you send an email you will need to turn this off.
- To unsubscribe send an e-mail to the above address and in the body of the message write **unsubscribe nsw-falls-network**

If you have any problems contact Esther at e.vance@unsw.edu.au.