

Confusion & Falls in Older People

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Aim: Provide information to assist in preventing falls in confused older people.

Objectives:

- List common symptoms of dementia and delirium which may impact on falls risk*
- Identify delirium*
- Discuss targeted strategies to assist in prevention of falls in confused older people*

Confused Older People

- Fall twice as much as older people without cognitive impairment
- Fractures 3x more common in people with dementia

Symptoms Impacting on Falls Prevention Strategies

- Memory impairment
- Disorientation
- Impaired executive function
- Impulsivity
- Hallucinations
- Impaired attention
- Impaired sleep/wake cycle

- Impaired comprehension
- Agitation
- Visuo spatial impairment
- Language impairment
- Gait impairment
- Incontinence

Identifying Delirium

Confusion Assessment Method (CAM):

Acute & fluctuating

&

Inattention

&

Disorganised thinking

Or

Changed Level of Consciousness

Strategies

Depending on environment and degree of
impairment

Review possible modifiable factors₁

- Mx depression
- Cardiovascular medications
- Adequate hydration
- Drug therapies for OH
- Strength & balance exercise in early dementia

Anticipate Needs

- Toileting program
- Pain
- Disorientation
- Comfort

Hallucinations

- Are they frightening?
- Are they misidentifications?
- Medication
- Lighting
- Distraction
- Supervision

Memory Impairment

- Assume forgetting
- Reinforce information regularly
- Positive statements
- Toileting program (supervise at all times)

Impulsivity

- Monitor
- Be aware of triggers
- Be aware of tubes/blankets etc
- Consider availability mobility aids
- Chair and bed alarms
- AIN observers/volunteers/family in hospital

Questions?

References

1. Allan, L. Ballard, C. Rowan, E. Kenny, R. (2009) Incidence and Prediction of Falls in Dementia: A prospective Study in Older People. PLoS ONW 4(5): e5521.
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2. Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People Best Practice Guidelines (2009) Australian commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
<http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/FallsGuidelines>