What is a fall?

Is a trip or slip a fall?  YES
Is it a fall if you don’t hurt yourself?  YES
Is a fall just bad luck?  SOMETIMES

One falls definition: “an unintentional event in which a person comes to rest on the ground, floor or lower level.”
Fall rates increase with increasing age

Campbell et al, 1981
Community setting

Very little indigenous data

- ~3/10 Aboriginal Australians over 45 years fell at least once in the previous year
- ~1/10 (12%) reporting injury due to the fall

LoGiudice et al 2012
Very little indigenous data

- 255 people
- Nearly 3 in 10 people fell down in the last year
- Nearly 2 in 10 hurt themselves (5 in 10 if >70 yo)
- 3 in 10 said the reason they fell was LOSS OF BALANCE

Kimberley Healthy Adults Project data, 2013

The issue of falls: be alarmed

- Falls are the leading cause of hospitalisation due to injury (38% of all injury hospitalisations)
- Falls responsible for 87% of injury hospitalisations in 85+ year olds

AIHW 2012: Hospital separations due to injury and poisoning, Australia 2009-2010
Indigenous data

• Injury and poisoning was the second leading cause of hospitalisation for Indigenous Australians in 2012–13, accounting for 27,653 (7.2%) hospitalisations of Indigenous people.

• Of these hospitalisations, 23% were due to assault and 19% were due to accidental falls.

Who falls?

• Falls increase with increasing age
• Women fall more than men - YES/NO?
• Women experience higher rates of injury than men - YES/NO?
• Women experience higher rates of fatal injury than men - YES/NO?
Key clinical points

- Fall rates have not changed substantially over the last decades......consider the reasons for this
- Consider those “groups” with higher risk of falls
Societal costs

• Social
• Economic impacts
• Health care costs
• Lost work/productivity costs

How much does a fall cost?

• $250
• $1,000
• $5,000
• $10,000
• $20,000

http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/falls/fallcost.html
Heinrich et al 2012
Mortality

- Death as immediate consequence of a fall is relatively rare
- Men have higher fall-related fatality rates than women
- 20% of people die in the year following hip fracture (Leibson 2002)
- 25% of those lying on floor for > 1hr died within one year (Wild 1981)
40-60% of falls result in injury
20-30% of falls result in serious injury

- Hip fracture: 1%
- Head injury: 2%
- Fracture other sites: 3%
- Open wound: 30%
- Soft tissue injury: 30%
- Bruising/contusion: 40%

O’Loughlin 1993; Campbell 1990; Stel 2004; Nachreiner 2007

Hip Fracture (Indigenous Data)

- Widening gap in minimal trauma hip fracture rates between indigenous and other Western Australians.
- Hip Fracture rate:
  - 273 per 100,000 person-years Indigenous
  - 149 per 100,000 person-years Non Indigenous

Wong et al 2012
Head Injury

• Indigenous people had 1.7 times the rate of head injuries from falls compared to non indigenous people

Jamieson et al. 2007

Fear of Falling

- Fall
- Increased risk of falling
- Activity restriction
- Functional impairment
- Fear of falling
Falls trigger residential care

10-12%

Key clinical points

• Older people underreport falls AND falls injury

• Injurious falls = worse outcomes

• Should it be falls prevention or INJURY prevention?
What works in falls and fall injury prevention?

WHAT WORKS? - Evidence

• Multifactorial
• Podiatry
• Pacemakers (for carotid sinus hypersensitivity)
• Anti-slip shoe device
• Hip protectors (for injury minimisation)

WHAT WORKS? – No evidence yet but try

Examples
• Change gait aid
• Safe footwear
• Education
• Improved nutrition
• Treat postural hypotension
• Treat incontinence