

Introduction to the topic

- Approximately a third of adults aged 65 and over, fall each year. Such falls are commonly presented at Accident and Emergency Departments (A&E)^{1,2}. Falls in older adults (those aged 65 years and over), can affect health, function and independence³.
- The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) 'falls' guidelines (2004)⁴ were developed to focus on the impact of falls, providing assistance in healthcare professionals' assessment and ways to prevent future occurrence of falls.
- Despite the development of these NICE guidelines, there is evidence that on some occasions they are not followed.

Research introduction

- This research investigates how older adults who have had a fall are cared for.
- Research has been conducted in two Hospitals' A&E Departments.
- Factors influencing whether guidelines are followed has been explored through an in-depth study of staff opinions.
- Staff have been interviewed and the care of patients has been observed.

Research questions

- When and why do staff follow (implement) guidelines?
- Is it possible to improve implementation of guidelines?

What influences whether guidelines are followed?

Communication:

- How staff communicate with patients and how they communicate with each other may influence whether guidelines are followed.

The Accident and Emergency Department context:

- The busy nature of the A&E and the limited space available may make it hard to follow all guideline care.
- The processes in place may influence care. For example, targets.

Staffing:

- Variation in staff working in the department and their approach to care may influence if guidelines are followed.
- Staff shortages may make it harder to follow guidelines.
- If staff lack motivation for their job then they may not follow all recommendations regarding patient care.

Older adult care needs:

- Older adults often have complex needs, for example, they may have health problems, as well as having experienced a fall.
- If a patient has a variety of symptoms, staff may need to prioritise treatment and therefore may not be able to follow all guidelines.

Education:

- Staff may not have a clear understanding of what a fall is and/or the care that they should provide the patient with. Lack of awareness may lead to guidelines not being followed.

Recommendations for improving care

Collaborative care:

- Collaborative care is when a variety of healthcare professionals work together and share their skills and knowledge in order to help patients⁶.
- Collaborative care may help to ensure that the care a patient receives is as recommended by the guidelines, through:
 - Sharing the workload and easing the pressure that A&E Departments have on them.
 - Gaining support from other departments within the hospital, for example, departments specialising in older adult care.
 - Gaining support from health services outside the hospital. For example, doctors' surgeries.

References:

- Help the Aged (2005). 'Don't Mention the F-Word'. Available on: <http://www.slips-online.co.uk/downloads/dont-mention-the-f-word.pdf> [Accessed 4th January 2010]
- Close, J., Ellis, M., Hooper, R., Gluckman, E., Jackson, S. & Swift, C. (1999). Prevention of falls in the elderly trial (PROFET): a randomised controlled trial. *Lancet*, 353, 93-97.
- Close, J. C.T. (2001). Interdisciplinary practice in the prevention of falls- a review of working models of care. *Age & Ageing*, 30-34, 8-12.
- NICE (2004). *Clinical practice guideline for the assessment and prevention of falls in older people*. Available on: <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/10956/29585/29585.pdf> [Accessed 4th January 2011].
- Sheldon, T. A., Cullum, N., Dawson, D., Larkshear, A., Lowson, K., Watt, L., West, P., Wright, D. & Wright, J. (2004). What's the evidence that NICE guidance has been implemented? Results from a national evaluation using time series analysis, audit of patient's notes, and interviews. *British Medical Journal*, 329, 999.
- Canadian Medical Association (2007). 'Putting patients first': Patient centred collaborative care- A discussion paper. Available on: <http://ths.mcmaster.ca/surgery/documents/CollaborativeCareBackgrounderRevised.pdf> [Accessed 15th May 2013]