

Shock absorbent flooring to reduce injury through falls

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A study to see if using 'shock absorbent' flooring can reduce injuries caused by falling in hospitals is being piloted by the University of Portsmouth.

The flooring is usually used in sports halls but this is the first time it has been used in hospitals where it will be tested to see if it can help stop people, especially the elderly, injuring themselves as badly if they fall. The risk of falls increases with age and [older people](#) in hospital are at even more risk and more likely to result in serious injury.

People over the age of 65 are commonly at risk of falling with one in three having a fall every year. About 30 per cent of people older than 65 fall at least once a year with 15 per cent falling at least twice and falls are the leading cause of mortality following injury in people aged over 75.

The HIP-HOP Flooring Study (Helping [Injury Prevention](#) in Hospitalised Older People) is being piloted in eight hospitals across the UK. The flooring looks like ordinary vinyl but has a memory foam backing with shock absorbing properties. Half of the hospitals have had the new floor laid in a bay on one of their older persons wards while the others will act as a 'control.' The research team will monitor the flooring over 12 months, examine the severity of all reported falls on both types of flooring and compare the results.

Amy Drahota from the University's School of Health Science and Social

Work is a researcher on the study. She said: “Older people are especially vulnerable to falls because they are more unsteady on their feet and this can be worse when they are unwell in hospital and walking in unfamiliar surroundings. If they do have a fall then shock absorbent flooring may help reduce the severity of their injuries and result in a swifter recovery and briefer stay in hospital.”

Two Hampshire hospitals are among those selected to test the flooring. St Mary’s Hospital in Newport on the Isle of Wight will test the new flooring while Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth is one of those acting as a control.

Julie Windsor is a Clinical Nurse Specialist in falls and bone health at Portsmouth Hospital NHS Trust's Queen Alexandra Hospital. She said: “Elderly people are already at increased risk of falling and that risk increases considerably when they are acutely ill in hospital and generally frailer.

“The pain and distress caused by a fall will add to the patient’s anxiety and can lead to an increased length of stay and a higher chance of the patient being discharged into care homes or requiring other long term care. “Portsmouth Hospitals takes patient safety and [falls](#) very seriously so we’re delighted to be taking part in a study which has the potential to improve the long term care and well-being of our patients.”

If the [flooring](#) is found to significantly reduce the severity of injuries through falling, it has the potential to be used in care homes and residential homes as well as [hospital](#) wards.

More information: www.hiphopflooringstudy.org.uk/

Provided by University of Portsmouth

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