

Many falls in advanced age result in hospital admission

December 11 2014

More than a third of people in advanced age had a fall in the last 12 months, and of those 20 percent needed hospitalisation, according to research from the University of Auckland.

These findings are from a population-based sample of Māori (aged 80 to 90 years) and non-Māori (aged 85 years), living in the Bay of Plenty, who are taking part in a [longitudinal study](#) of advanced ageing, called Life and Living in Advanced Age: a Cohort Study in New Zealand - Te Puāwaitanga O Ngā Tapuwae Kia Ora Tonu (LiLACS NZ).

This recent report by LiLACS researchers presents key findings about [falls](#) in advanced age, including how often falls caused injury and [hospital admission](#).

The study includes the prevalence of falls, multiple falls, injury from falls, and hospitalisations from falls for people in advanced age - by sex, ethnic group, and socio-economic deprivation. Use of physiotherapy services is also described for people who fell.

Study co-author, Professor Ngaire Kerse (Director for the University's School of Population Health), says "falls remain an important issue for people in older age. Injury from falls is frequent and potentially physiotherapy could be more frequently used to prevent further falls."

"Falls can be a devastating event for [older people](#) especially if [hospitalisation](#) results," she says. "Hip fracture is a common cause of

increased disability and decreased independence for older people."

For this report, a fall was defined as an unexpected event (including slips and trips) in which the person lost their balance and landed on the floor, ground or lower level. Fallers are people who had fallen at least once in the last 12 months.

There were no significant differences in the proportion of Māori and non-Māori, or of men and women, who reported having fallen, after adjustment for age.

The report noted that of the 20 percent of people who reported that they had fallen more than once, 13 percent reported that they had fallen two or three times and seven percent reported that they had fallen four times or more.

Those who had fallen more than once did not vary by sex, ethnic group or socio-economic deprivation.

More than a third of people in advanced age were injured after they fell with 35 percent of people injured from a fall, and 10 percent reporting a fracture. About 20 percent of those who fell were hospitalised.

Hospitalisation occurred for 20 percent of people because of a fall - 18 percent of Māori women fallers had been to hospital because of a fall and 14 percent of Māori male fallers had been to hospital because of a fall.

Only 20 percent of people who had fallen in the last year had used physiotherapy services.

Provided by University of Auckland

Citation: Many falls in advanced age result in hospital admission (2014, December 11) retrieved 20 March 2024 from

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