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."

Provided by University of Portsmouth