

Environmental Falls Risk Assessment in the Prehospital Setting for Community-Dwelling Older Adults

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INTRODUCTION: This study describes the use of a validated prehospital environmental falls risk assessment tool in a community-dwelling older adult population and assesses the relationship between environmental risk factors and incidence of falls.

METHODS: From 11/2018-3/2020, one EMS agency completed the environmental falls risk assessment on patients ages >50 (n=322). Medical record review was used to collect information regarding the encounter following the EMS call and any hospital visits for falls 6 months prior and 12 months after the EMS call.

RESULTS: Environmental falls risk factors were prevalent (median = 3 risk factors; 91% had at least 1). The most common were slippery floors (53%), trip hazards outside (49%), and cramped/narrow walkways (47%). 55% of EMS incidents were for falls. 18% had a fall-related ED/hospital encounter in the six months prior; 21% had one in the following year. Overall, 67% had a fall encounter during the 18-month period. However, prevalence of risk factors did not differ between patients who fell or not.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: The majority of older adults requiring EMS have environmental falls risk factors in their homes. Addressing these risk factors is important since most patients are discharged home. All patients have similar rates of risk; all older adults presenting to the hospital should be counseled on reducing environmental falls risk.