



Featured VITAS Expert

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Fall Prevention for Elderly Population

GOAL: To learn the incidence and causes of falls among elderly patients, and to develop effective fall-prevention strategies.

<https://www.vitas.com/partners/continuing-education/fall-prevention-september-13-2018>

Key Takeaways:

1. Falls are the leading cause of injury among adults age 65 and older, with elderly patients accounting for half of all deaths due to falls, despite comprising only 15% of trauma admissions from falls.
2. Approximately half of all long term care facility residents will sustain a fall, with up to 27% of incidents caused by environmental conditions such as poor lighting, slick or irregular floor surfaces, unsuitable furniture, unsafe stairways, improperly maintained wheelchairs and lack of support in bathrooms.
3. Personal risk factors associated with falls include age, activity levels contributing to strength and balance, habits, diet and an array of medical factors:
 - Generalized weakness
 - Cardiac arrhythmias, blood pressure fluctuations
 - Depression, dementia, Alzheimer's disease
 - Visual and hearing impairment
 - Medication use, including sedatives, anxiolytics and antidepressants
4. When assessing the risk level of an elderly patient, consider their history of falls, whether they have sufficient oxygenation to prevent dizziness, their level of consciousness/awareness, whether they exhibit impaired judgement or sensory defects, their footwear, blood pressure, elimination needs, and any medications that may impact fall risk or outcomes.
5. Fall reduction requires a team approach focused on care planning, which includes staff education, the assessment of elimination needs, monitoring and assessment of safety concerns and medications, and proper exercise and use of assistive devices.

Question: How can you advocate for elderly patients with a high risk of falling? Would hospice care improve the patient's quality of life?

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