Presenting to health services after falls and fall injuries in very old age: a population-based study of over-90-year-olds

Cambridge City over-75s Cohort Study (CC75C)

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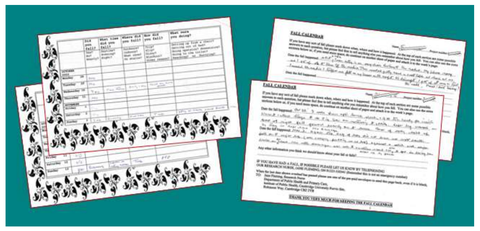
Introduction

Older people who fall often do not present to health services, even if injured, but this is difficult to quantify.

Methods and population

Prospective 1year falls data collection within a representative population-based longitudinal cohort study of ageing

- >90-year-old Cambridge City over-75s Cohort participants
- 96% of cohort survivors still alive at the time of the 6th wave survey (year 17 since baseline) took part including consent to join the linked 1-year falls follow-up study
- 20 men and 90 women aged 91-105, 18% living in care
- All successfully followed-up for 1yr (20 died during the year)
- Weekly fall calendars completed by study participants or their relatives/carers; follow-up phone-call if not returned



- Follow-up interviews after each reported fall (in person visit to participant's home/care home or phoned relative)
- Interviews after reported falls asked about circumstances, consequences and ***"Did you tell anyone about that fall?"***

Results

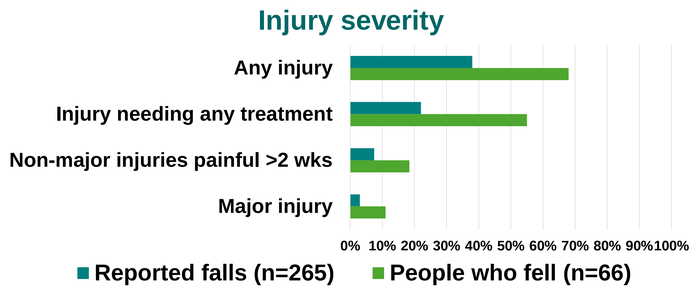
Reported falls

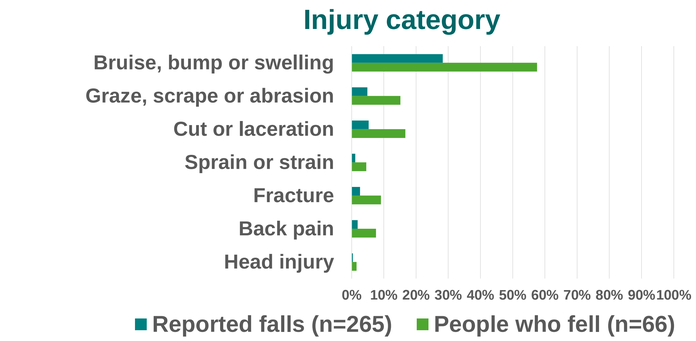
During 1-year follow-up

- 60% (66/110) of participants reported they fell, or relatives/carers reported they fell)
- 45% fell more than once
- 265 falls
- 2.8 falls/person-year

Reported injuries

- Considerably higher proportions of **people who fell** were affected by all categories of injuries, injuries which required any treatment and major injuries than the proportions of **falls** resulting in all these injuries





Presenting to health services after a fall

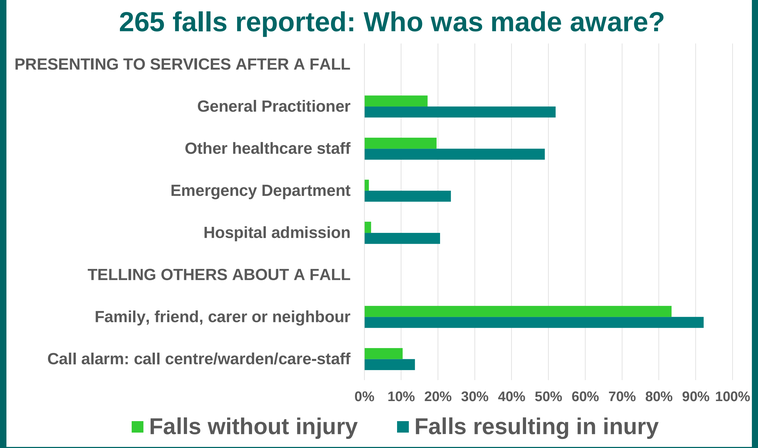
- 40% of falls and
- 64% of injurious falls presented to health service attention
- 6% in addition happened in hospital

Telling anyone about a fall

- Family, friends, neighbours, informal carers, wardens of sheltered housing schemes and care home staff were told, or were alerted by alarm systems, about most falls:
  - 87% of all falls
  - 92% of injurious falls

Neither

- 9% of falls and 4% of injurious falls reported to the study had *neither* presented to any healthcare staff or service *nor* been mentioned to anyone else.



Conclusions

Findings from this study with a representative population of 'older old people' show:

- Rates of falls and resultant injuries from rigorous falls data collection are higher than reported in studies of less old older people
- These high rates clearly have implications for service providers across primary/community and secondary care
- Amongst this study's over-90-year-olds health services were unaware of
  - more than half the falls
  - and were unaware of almost three in every ten falls that resulted in injuries

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