

Documented Neurological Examination in Patients Presenting with Falls

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Background

In Scotland, more than 18,000 older people are admitted to hospital after a fall each year. One in three people over the age of 65 experience a fall at least once each year.¹

Neurological examination is an essential part of the initial assessment of these patients in hospital and can determine the cause of falls such as stroke, peripheral neuropathies and Parkinson's disease.

Local anecdotal evidence suggested that this was often not carried out, with the potential for delayed diagnosis and treatment.

Methods

Baseline data was collected from clinical notes of admissions to the care of the elderly (COTE) wards at University Hospital Hairmyres (UHH) over a 1-month period.

Multiple departmental education sessions were arranged to highlight to medical staff the importance of neurological examination in patients presenting to hospital following a fall. A poster was designed highlighting common causes of falls and in particular emphasising the importance of performing a neurological examination (Figure 1). This was introduced into the Emergency Department and Acute Medical Unit, where these patients are commonly first assessed. Following each intervention the data collection process was repeated.

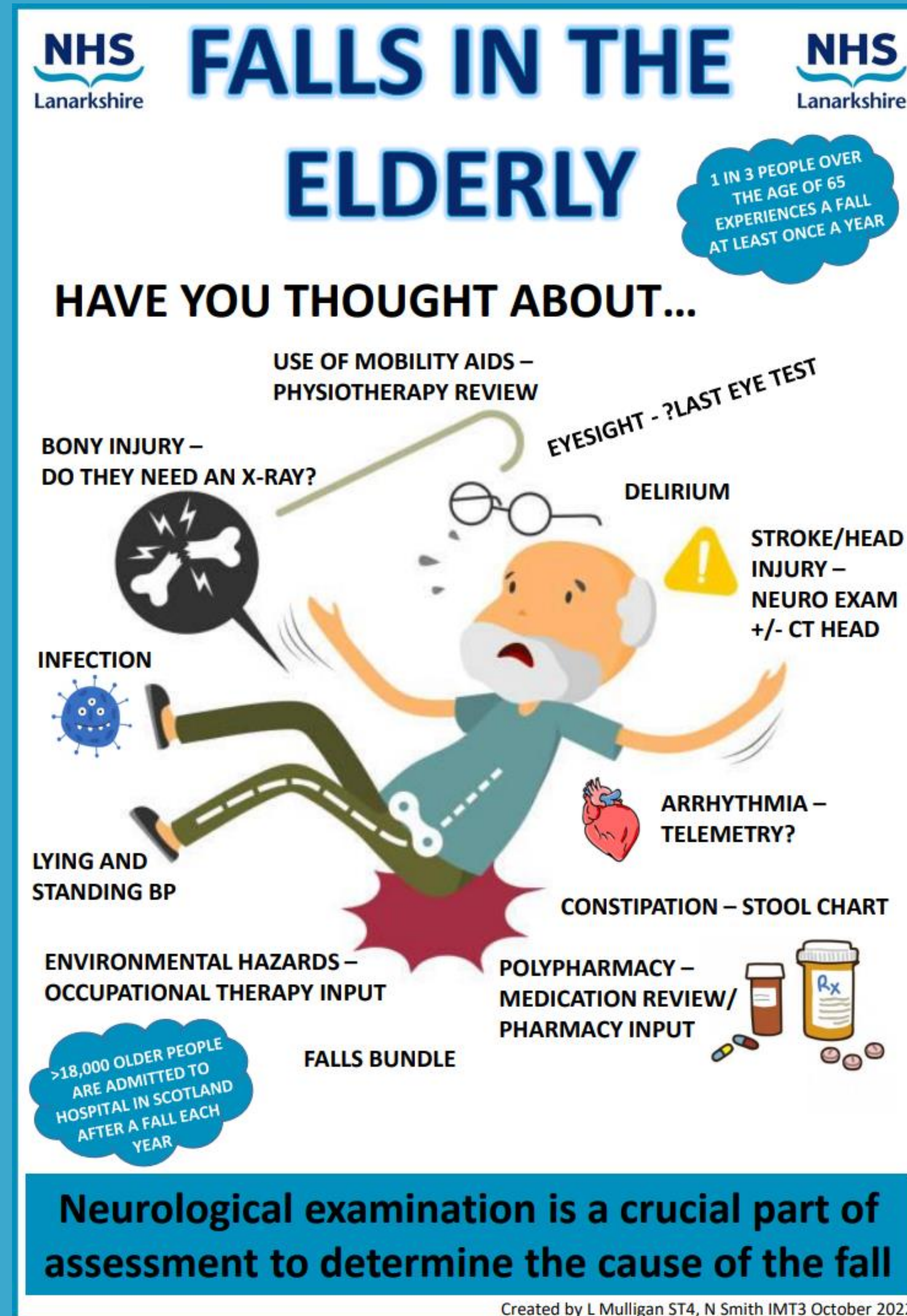
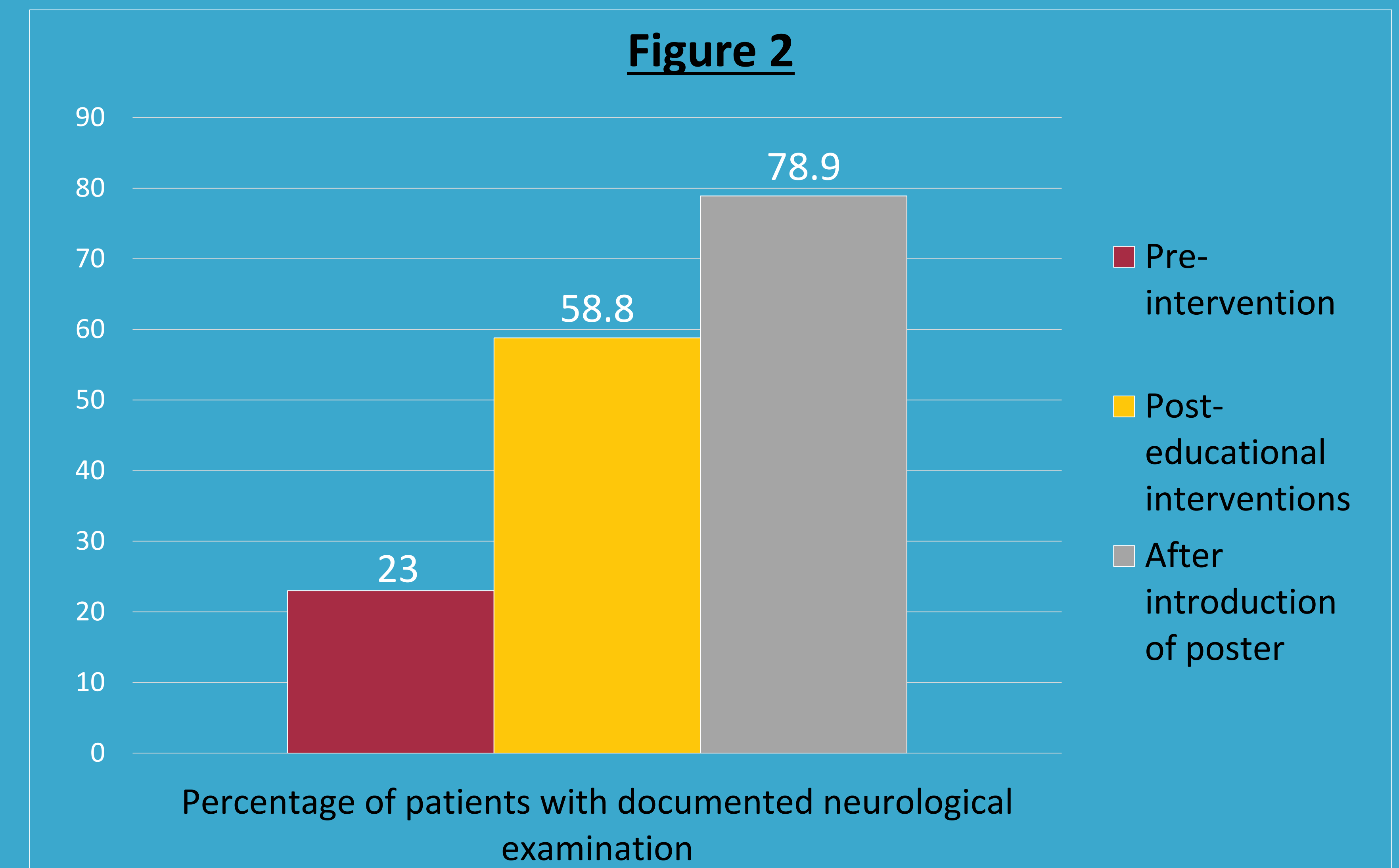


Figure 1

Results

Following these interventions, there was a sustained improvement in the frequency of patients admitted with falls having documented neurological examinations on admission (Figure 2).



Conclusion

Educational sessions resulted in a 243% increase in documented neurological examinations for patients admitted with falls. We hope this improvement will lead to earlier identification of causes of patients' falls, allowing prompt management.

References

1. NHS Inform. Why Falls Matter. Available from: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/preventing-falls/why-falls-matter> (accessed 27 November 2022).