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Fall injuries in older adult men and its implications for public policy and services support

Guillermina Solis

The University of Texas at El Paso, USA

Background: Unintentional falls and related injuries among older adults are heralded as a public health concern. One out of three older adults requires medical care post fall increasing the demand for health services and social support at all levels. Sex differences resulting from falls have been identified. Men have a high rate hospitalizations and mortality. A gap in knowledge exists in gender specific, social and environmental risk factors.

Purpose: This study analyzed the circumstances and outcomes of fall injuries in men who accessed the community emergency medical system (EMS) in El Paso, Texas after a fall.

Methodology: A 12 month retrospective quantitative study of community dwelling older adults who sought services from EMS after injury was conducted. Men (N=418) 55 years old and older were included in the analysis of circumstances, place of fall, time; injuries sustained and designated acuity level. Descriptive statistics and non-parametric analysis were conducted to identify relationships among variables.

Results: The average age was 74±11.8, majority were Hispanic, most fell outdoors had highest acuity level, head and upper body injuries were common and majority fell during early mornings. Fall circumstances and time among men 80+ years old differed from younger group.

Discussion: The prevalence of outdoor falls and acuity level coupled with the difference in circumstances of fall injury in the 80+ warrants further studies of older men and fall injuries. Results reflect a need to develop culturally congruent strategies for prevention and work in collaboration with public health agencies to evaluate social and environmental risks that contribute to fall injuries and develop policies that creates an "aging" friendly community. An interdisciplinary approach for creating innovative methods for fall prevention and support of post fall care to aid in recovery process is a promising way to reduce the problem.

Biography

Guillermina Solis completed her PhD in Interdisciplinary Health Science in 2010, from The University of Texas at El Paso and her Post Doctoral Fellowship at the University of Utah in 2012. She is an Assistant Professor in the University of Texas at El Paso. The focus of her research is fall injuries in older adults and the utilization of emergency services leading to identifying gaps of appropriate health service utilization to improve physical function. She has presented her work at national & international conferences and collaborated with other health disciplines addressing geriatric topics. She is a practicing geriatric nurse practitioner where she sees the opportunity to explore health issues affecting older adults.

gsolis2@utep.edu

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