

PREVALENCE, CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF ACCIDENTAL FALLS AMONG ELDERLY IRANIANS

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Introduction: Falling is one of the most disabling harms at the old age. It threatens the health, independence and quality of life of older adults. Information about the circumstances and predisposing factors of falls is essential for developing and implementing effective interventions. The aim of study was to investigate the prevalence, circumstances and injurious consequences of falls among community-dwelling older adults in Tehran/ Iran.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted in Tehran. A total of 653 individuals (321 (49.2%) men and 332 (50.8 %) women) aged 65 years and over were selected by a simple random sampling. Data regarding the number of accidental falls which occurred during the past 12 months, as well as socio-economic circumstances and consequence of falls were collected through face-to-face interviews using structured questionnaires at the older people's homes.

Results: The prevalence of falls was 39.7 %, higher in women than in men (47 % vs. 32 %, $p < 0.001$). Most of the falls occurred at home and after midday (PM). One-fifth of falls (23.2%) took place in forward direction and this was more prevalent among women (60%). One-third of attributed cause of falls was loss of balance (31.3%) and this was more prevalent among women (53.1%) and the oldest people (58%). Injury as a result of the fall occurred among 212 people (81.9 %) of fallers.

Conclusions: Falls in older adults are of high public health importance. The prevalence of falls among community-dwelling elderly in Tehran is high. The identification of circumstance and risk factors is a starting point for the development of interventions to reduce falls among elderly people. This study provides new insights into characteristics and circumstances of injurious falls and their relation with age, gender and injury severity, and may guide the targeting of falls prevention at specific location and risk groups, including highly functional older men and women. Efforts to prevent falls in the elderly should be made at community level.

Keywords: *Accidental Falls; Prevalence; Elderly people; Circumstances; Consequences*