

Title: Falls in the elderly: who, when, where and why falls in nursing home.

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Introduction: Falls are a major problem in the elderly: up to 60% of nursing home residents fall each year and one half of these “fallers” have multiple episodes.

Methods and Materials: Over a period of 42 months (1/07/2005 – 31/12/ 2008) 544 falls occurred in 146 persons (101 females) over 65 yrs (mean age = 84 ± 7.5) living in RSA Villa San Clemente, a 110 beds nursing home. For every fall we collected age and sex of faller, time, location, cause and dynamics of fall. Patients were categorized into 5 groups: 1 fall (Gr.A= 51 pts), 2-3 falls (Gr. B=45pts), 4-5 falls (Gr. C=20pts), 6-10 falls (Gr D=18 pts) and > 10 falls (Gr. E=12pts). Fallers were categorized into three groups in relation to the walking ability: walking without assistance, walking with assistance; not walking.

Results: Mean age was related to the number of falls (Gr.E= 89.25 ± 7.26 ; GR.D= 85.33 ± 7.74 ; Gr.C= 84.60 ± 6.96 ; Gr.B= 82.24 ± 6.81 ; Gr.A= 82.35 ± 7.65). Elderly with a higher autonomy in walking fell more frequently than impaired ones ($p < 0.000001$). Falls occurred particularly in the afternoon (228=24.22%) and in the morning (187=19.87%) for all groups. Location of falls was more frequently the bedroom (209=38.41%) or other living spaces (224=41.17%). With regard to causes of falling, accidents were the leading cause of falling (346=63.6%); moreover, 271 (49.81%) falls were due to slipping, and 169 (31.06%) to an hazard of the patient. We want to remark that a number of falls could have been avoided, because they were caused by drugs use (6 falls), inappropriate dresses or shoes (21 falls), inappropriate aids (5 falls), shoving (12 falls), slipping (26 falls).

Conclusion: Falls are a frequent event in the elderly living in nursing home but the 13% of them (70/544) could be avoided with a fall preventive strategy addressed to a more careful health care.