



**TITLE:** Post-Fall Monitoring in Long-Term Care: Guidelines

**DATE:** 17 February 2012

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the evidence-based guidelines regarding the frequency and type of monitoring required for patients experiencing a fall in long-term care?

### **KEY MESSAGE**

Limited evidence was identified regarding the frequency and type of monitoring required for patients experiencing a fall in long-term care; evidence-based guidelines suggest a post-fall evaluation using a Post-Fall Assessment Tool or algorithm which includes a physical assessment of the patient and all possible contributing factors to the fall.

### **METHODS**

A limited literature search was conducted on key resources including PubMed, The Cochrane Library (2012, Issue 1), University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, Canadian and abbreviated list of major international major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused Internet search. Methodological filters were applied to limit retrieval to health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, and guidelines. Where possible, retrieval was limited to the human population. The search was also limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2007 and February 6, 2012. Internet links were provided, where available.

The summary of findings was prepared from the abstracts of the relevant information. Please note that data contained in abstracts may not always be an accurate reflection of the data contained within the full article.

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## RESULTS

Rapid Response reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, and evidence-based guidelines.

Three evidence-based guidelines and recommendations were identified regarding the frequency and type of monitoring required for patients experiencing a fall in long-term care. No health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, or non-randomized studies were identified. Additional references of potential interest are provided in the appendix.

## OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Three evidence-based guidelines and recommendations<sup>1-3</sup> suggest a post-fall evaluation using a Post-Fall Assessment Tool or algorithm which includes a physical assessment of the patient and all possible contributing factors to the fall. One guideline suggests that patients be monitored for approximately 48 hours following an observed or suspected fall as delayed complications may potentially arise.<sup>2</sup> Once an assessment has ruled out any significant injury to the patient, the following should be documented:

- history of the fall or witness description<sup>2</sup>
- patient's underlying illness and problems<sup>2</sup>
- patient medications and care plan<sup>2,3</sup>
- environmental conditions surrounding the area of the fall<sup>2,3</sup>
- functional, sensory, and psychological status of the patient<sup>2</sup>

If a patient experiences a serious injury from a fall, an in-depth analysis (e.g. a critical incident review) is required.<sup>3</sup>

## REFERENCES SUMMARIZED

### Health Technology Assessments

No literature identified

### Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses

No literature identified

### Randomized Controlled Trials

No literature identified

### Non-Randomized Studies

No literature identified

### Guidelines and Recommendations

1. Fall management guideline [Internet]. Hamilton (NJ): Health Care Association of New Jersey (HCANJ); 2006 (revised Mar 2007). Available from: [http://www.hcanj.org/docs/hcanjbp\\_fallmgmt6.pdf](http://www.hcanj.org/docs/hcanjbp_fallmgmt6.pdf)  
See section 2.C.1 'Post Fall Evaluation'  
NGC summary: <http://www.guideline.gov/content.aspx?id=13484>
2. Gray-Micelli D. Preventing falls in acute care [Internet]. 3rd ed. In: Capezuti E, Zwicker D, Mezey M, Fulmer T, editors. Evidence-based geriatric nursing protocols for best practice. New York (NY): Springer; 2008. p. 161-98 [cited 2012 Feb 16]. Available from: [http://consultgerirn.org/topics/falls/want\\_to\\_know\\_more](http://consultgerirn.org/topics/falls/want_to_know_more)  
See 'Follow-Up Monitoring of Condition'  
NGC summary: <http://www.guideline.gov/content.aspx?id=12265>
3. Falls prevention and management: regional clinical practice guidelines [Internet]. Winnipeg: Winnipeg Regional Health Authority; 2011 May. [cited 2012 Feb 16]. Available from: [http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/ebpt/files/FallsPrev\\_CPG.pdf](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/ebpt/files/FallsPrev_CPG.pdf)  
See Appendix C, 'Post-Fall Management'  
NGC summary: [http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/ebpt/files/FallsPrev\\_CPG.pdf](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/ebpt/files/FallsPrev_CPG.pdf)

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**APPENDIX – FURTHER INFORMATION:**

**Additional References**

4. Oregon Patient Safety Commission. Falls investigation guide for first responders [Internet]. Portland (OR): Oregon Patient Safety Commission; [date unknown] [cited 2012 Feb 16]. Available from: <http://oregonpatientsafety.org/docs/reports/Falls-Investigation-Guide-for-First-Responders.pdf>
5. Post fall [Internet]. In: VHA NCPS Fall Prevention and Management. Washington (DC): U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; 2009 [cited 2012 Feb 16]. Available from: <http://www.patientsafety.gov/CogAids/FallPrevention/index.html#page=page-9>