Determining risk factors associated with falling among elderly at residential care facilities in Tehran

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Abstract
Background: Falling is a serious and common problem among old people. Falls may lead to pain, slight or severe injuries, increased duration of hospital stay, and discomfort in patients, thus affecting the quality of life.

Objective: The purpose of this study was to assess the risk factors associated with falling among elderly at residential care facilities and also to determine the gait and balance statuses of old people living in such institutions.

Methods: This was a descriptive analytical study in which one hundred adults aged 65 or higher with the ability to walk were investigated in 2005. Demographic variables, cognitive and functional status, previous and current medical history, and drug intake were investigated. Balance and gait statuses were evaluated by Tinetti Performance Oriented Mobility Assessment Tool (POMA).

Findings: The results showed that the total score for gait and balance tests on POMA were 19-24 among 31% of cases (high risk) and 25-28 in 37% of cases (low risk) whereas 32% of cases were not at risk of falling. The data demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between age and the scores obtained for balance and gait tests and also the sum of scores for both tests (p=0/002, γ=0/303). Furthermore, significant correlations were found between the current physical and psychological diseases, pervious physical diseases, and use of aid devices with the scores obtained for balance and gait tests and also the sum of scores for both tests (p =0).

Conclusion: Considering our data, it is obvious that the elderly who live in institutions are at risk of falling, hence, the application of standard assessment tool used in our study could be suggested as an easy and rapid technique in identifying the risk factors associated with falling at elderly residential care facilities through a targeted multiple intervention.

Keywords: Elderly People, Risk of Falling, Balance Status, Gait Status

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