

ABSTRACT

Falls are a common problem for older people in hospital and can negatively impact on health outcomes. This pilot study aimed to investigate the reliability and predictive accuracy of a newly developed multidisciplinary assessment tool – the “falls risk for hospitalised older people” (FRHOP) and to compare the prediction accuracy of the FRHOP with the “St Thomas’s risk assessment tool in falling elderly inpatients” (STRATIFY). Forty four patients aged over 65 were recruited from five wards in a sub-acute geriatric hospital. Participants were assessed either once only as part of the prediction study or twice as part of the reliability study. Assessments were conducted by trained project staff including a podiatrist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and a prosthetist. Incident Report Forms were reviewed after discharge to identify participants who fell during their current hospitalisation for the prediction study. There was a broad range of risk factors identified, with total falls risk scores ranging from 10 to 35 [mean 20.6 (SD 5.8)]. Among the risk factors identified, 48% of participants had one or more foot pathologies and only 18% had footwear that met pre-determined criteria for appropriate footwear. Both retest and inter-rater reliability of the FRHOP were high [ICC (2,1) =0.95 and 0.85 respectively]. Seven participants fell (16%), two falling more than once. Using the total number of risk factors rated as high risk, a cut-off score of four or more yielded a sensitivity of 57% and specificity of 68%. The STRATIFY had a sensitivity of 43% and specificity of 43%. The FRHOP is a reliable falls risk assessment tool with moderate levels of prediction accuracy. Further validation with a larger sample is warranted.

Keywords: falls, elderly, risk assessment, assessment tool

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Correspondence: Dr Keith Hill, Senior Research Fellow, National Ageing Research Institute, PO Box 31, Parkville, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3052. Phone: 61 3 83872639 Fax: 61 3 83872153
Email: k.hill@nari.unimelb.edu.au