Western Australian Falls Report: The incidence of fall-related injuries in 2017

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Abstract (400 words) Policy and Practice
Mode of presentation: Oral paper presentation (15mins + 5mins for questions)
Theme: Injury surveillance methods or falls prevention and rehabilitation
388/400

Context:
In Western Australia (WA) falls are a significant public health issue, ranking as the leading cause of injury fatality and hospitalisation.[1] Consequences of falls, including fractures, traumatic brain injuries, and fear of falling, can place burden on the individual who experienced the fall, their carers, and the healthcare system. Gaining an insight into the incidence of falls in WA is vital to reducing the impact of falls on the community and health system. However to date, there is no one report that consistently monitors the current incidence of falls in WA.

Objectives:
The WA Falls Report 2019, aimed to provide one report, which outlines the incidence of falls-related injuries in WA and an opportunity to monitor future trends.

Key messages:
To best depict the number and rate of falls incidents in WA, data relating to falls-related fatalities, hospitalisations and emergency department admissions were collated from several sources. All incidents with a primary diagnosis of falls (W00-W19) under the International Classification of Diseases Tenth Revision (ICD-10) were included within the report.

Overall incidence, age groups, regions and causality were highlighted as trends to monitor. In 2017, there were 26,338 falls-related hospitalisations and 17,076 falls-related emergency department attendances.[2] Individuals aged 65 years and older recorded the highest rates of fatalities and hospitalisations, and the longest average length of stay (7.75 days).[2] The Kimberley (133% higher than the State rate) and Midwest (21.7% higher than the State rate) regions had the highest rates of hospitalisations.[2] The leading causes of falls-related hospitalisations were due to slipping, tripping or stumbling on the same level (25.38%) and falls from, off or into an object on the same level (24.24%).[3]

Discussion and conclusions:
The WA Falls Report 2019 also includes case studies regarding falls prevention initiatives targeting older adults, children, Aboriginal peoples and regional residents, which highlight prevention strategies. Gaining an insight into priority issues and trends will assist advocacy efforts to support initiatives that aim to reduce the incidence of falls-related injuries.

How policy/practice pushes the boundaries:
The WA Falls Report 2019 provides key WA falls-related injury data in one report to monitor trends and support the development of falls prevention advocacy, policy and targeted initiatives. The development of subsequent editions of the WA Falls Report will assist the monitoring of these at-risk populations and the overall incidence of falls-related injuries in WA.

References:

1. Hendrie, D., Miller, T., Randall, S., Brameld, K. & Moorin, R. *Incidence and costs of injury in WA 2012*. (Chronic Disease Prevention Directorate Department of Health WA, 2016).

2. Data generated from the WA Hospital Morbidity Data System (2017), ABS Mortality Data (2017) and WA Emergency Department Data Collection (2017), by the Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health WA in collaboration with the Cooperative Research Centre for Spatial Information (CRC-SI). Extracted April 2019.
3. Data generated from the WA Hospital Morbidity Data System (2017) by the Information and Performance Governance Unit, WA Department of Health. Extracted April 2019.