

Factors associated with near-falls and falls in community-dwelling older adults: a preliminary report on an ongoing cross-sectional study

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Objectives: To investigate the factors contributing to near-falls in the past month and falls in the past 12 months in community-dwelling older adults.

Background: Near-falls have been viewed as a “precursor” of falls in older adults. However, little is known about the risk factors for near-falls in community-dwelling older adults. Determining the risk factors for near-falls would help to identify older individuals who are at a higher risk of falls.

Methods: Community-dwelling older adults who are (1) 65 years or older; (2) able to walk independently indoor and outdoor were recruited. Demographics, history of near-falls and falls, fear of falling, balance confidence, activity avoidance, physical performance, reactive balance, cognitive function, depressive and anxiety symptoms, and functional activities of the participants were assessed.

Results: Until May 2021, 59 participants were recruited. Nineteen participants (32%) had at least 1 near-fall in the past month, and 25 participants (44%) had at least 1 fall in the past 12 months. Fear of falling (OR = 0.91, $p = 0.047$) and lower limb strength (OR = 1.07, $p = 0.044$) were associated with near-falls, while reactive balance (OR = 1.75, $p = 0.032$) and anxiety symptoms (OR = 1.12, $p = 0.035$) were associated with falls.

Conclusion: The preliminary results show that fear of falling and lower limb strength may be associated with near-falls, and the factors contributing to near-falls and falls in community-dwelling older adults may be different. Further study using a larger sample is therefore indicated to examine the risk factors for near-falls.