FALLS ARE COMMON IN OLDER ADULTS

- Falls are one of the most common events that threaten independents in older adults
- 1 in 3 adults > 65 report falling each year
  - 50% of those >80 years old
  - More than 60% report prior fall
- Complication of falls are leading cause of death from injury in those 65 or older
• Most falls by older adults result in some injury
• 5%-10% of falls by older adults result in fracture or more serious soft-tissue injury or head trauma
• The death rate attributable to falls increases with age
• Mortality highest in white men aged ≥85: >180 deaths/100,000 population

MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY

• Associated with:
  ➢ Decline in functional status
  ➢ Nursing home placement
  ➢ Increased use of medical services
  ➢ Fear of falling

• Half of those who fall are unable to get up without help (“long lie”)
• A “long lie” predicts lasting decline in functional status

SEQUELAE
• ↑ Emergency department visits

• ↑ Hospitalizations

• Indirect costs from fall-related injuries such as hip fractures are substantial

COST

▶ Motor planning/processing speed higher level brain functioning
▶ Vestibular
▶ Vision
▶ Peripheral nerve function
▶ Skeletal system
▶ Muscles strength
▶ Cardiovascular system

CAUSES-MULTIFACTORIAL INTRINSIC
ENVIROMENTAL/EXTRINSIC

- Medication, medication, medication
- Shoes
- Clutter/rugs/thresholds
- lighting

MEDICATIONS

- Specific classes, for example:
  - Benzodiazepines
  - Other sedatives
  - Antidepressants
  - Antipsychotic drugs
  - Cardiac medications
  - Hypoglycemic agents
  - Anticholinergics

- Recent medication dosage adjustments
- Total number of medications
HISTORY: Tell me about your fall
Examination: Vision, orthostatic BP’s, Gait speed, TUG, Berg Balance, progressive rhomberg, strength, vibration sense, tremor, rigidity, bradykinesia
Lab B12, Vitamin D, TSH, BMP, CBC
Imaging: DEXA, xray/mri rarely needed

EVALUATION

Most commonly identified interventions to prevent falls in community dwelling elders:
- Prescribe exercise, particularly balance, strength, and gait training
- Discontinue or minimize psychoactive and other medications
- Manage postural hypotension
- Manage foot problems and footwear
- Supplement vitamin D
- Treat vision impairment/change to monocular glasses
- Manage heart rate and rhythm abnormalities
- Modify the home environment

TREATMENT