

WHO Report on Falls „Step Safely“

EUGMS SIG online meeting
Thursday, July 8, 2021

Prof. Dr. Clemens Becker
Unit Digitale Geriatrie, Universitätsklinik Heidelberg
Department of Clinical Gerontology, RBMF

Conflicts of Interest:

Consultation: E. Lilly (Sarkopenie), BHCS, Philips, Gait up, Gaitrite, APDM,
Lectures honoraria: Amgen, Pfitzer, Nutricia

Fall prevention in 2020-2021

- **WHO campaign (launch in May)**
- **Global working group on falls (Montero Odasso et al.)**
- **Landmark papers in NEJM (Bhasin and Lamb)**
- **Emerging new approaches**



Step safely: strategies for preventing and managing falls across the life-course

History and background

Main findings and recommendations

Possible implications for geriatric medicine in Europe

History and Background

- **Pre-existing WHO reports (Falls and Ageing)**
Editors D. Skelton and C. Todd
- **Working group on current report started in 2014**
Dr. D. Meddings
George Institute - Global Health, Sydney

First meeting in Geneva, 2015
Several iterations 2019-2020
incl. several European experts

- **Official launch April 26, 2021**

Report



27 APRIL 2021

Step Safely:
Strategies for
preventing and
managing falls
across the life-
course

[Download](#)

[Read More](#)

Main Findings and Recommendations

- The burden of falls and the lasting consequences are major and often not recognized in many countries.
- The number of death caused by falls are increasing.
- The number of lifeyears with disability is paramount.
- Falls should be considered as a major target for public health campaigns.

FALLS

ARE NOT AN INEVITABLE PART OF LIFE OR AGEING

EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS CAN PREVENT MOST FALLS

684 000

DEATHS WORLDWIDE FROM FALLS EACH YEAR



FROM 2000 TO 2019 DEATHS FROM FALLS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY



A SIGNIFICANT & GROWING GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUE

CAUSED BY INCREASES IN:



CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

32 000 CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS DIE EACH YEAR FROM FALLS

Deaths in low- to middle-income countries **3x higher**

Risk factors include:

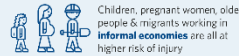


WORKERS

36 000 DIE FROM FALLS AT WORK/YEAR

Some industries are particularly high risk:

Death rates from falls in construction are **7x higher** than for other occupations



OLDER PEOPLE

THOSE OVER 50 YEARS OLD HAVE HIGHEST RISK OF DEATH OR SERIOUS INJURY & RISK INCREASES WITH AGE

1/3 of those aged 60 years or over fall at least once a year

Fear of falling can significantly impact quality of life

Those living in care are more likely to fall compared to those living in the community

THE STEP SAFELY REPORT EXPLORES & RATES EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS TO PREVENT FALLS SUCH AS:

- CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS**
 - Home safety information for parents
 - Soft-fall playground surfaces
- WORKERS**
 - Non-slip footwear
 - Stricter safety regulations
- OLDER PEOPLE**
 - Strength and balance training
 - Home assessment and modifications

Main Findings and Recommendations

■ Lifespan approach

Liaise with other stakeholders

■ Falls are a major health problem of older adults and children.

■ It is fully acknowledged that older adults have the highest risk.

From a global perspectives children must be adressed:

neighbourhood safety

life-space is diminished

loss of neuro-motor capacity in many regions

Report



27 APRIL 2021

Step Safely:
Strategies for
preventing and
managing falls
across the life-
course

Download

Read More

Main Findings and Recommendations

■ Inequality and access

- The evidence of more than 200 RCTs is mainly from high income countries (HICs).
- The findings of systematic reviews and meta-analysis is biased from a global perspectives.
- Many programs such as OEP, LiFE, WEBB, Standing Tall are not affordable and sustainable for MICs and LICs (middle and low income).
- Programs are desperately needed for these regions.

Main Findings and Recommendations

- **Occupational Safety** (mainly MICs and LICs)
- Some working conditions are extremely hazardous and lead to many falls, fall related injuries including lethal falls.
- Examples are scaffolding, climbing trees
- Occupational safety should be a major pillar.



Main Findings and Recommendations

- **Older adults** (in HICs, most but not all European countries)
- The evidence is robust to recommend upscaling of programs.
- These recommendations include
 - regular progressive exercise of balance and strength
 - medication review
 - vision
 - adaptations of the build environment and neighborhood

Main Findings and Recommendations

- **Older adults and settings**
- Living in the community
- Living in care settings
- Falls in acute settings

Possible implications

- More than 80 % of all countries rely / build on WHO recommendations
- It can be expected that many governmental bodies and health agencies will acknowledge the implementation gap.
- Due to the late COVID 19 situation the awareness is growing that mobility disability is growing and – hence – the risk of falling is increasing due to a loss of intrinsic motor capacity.
- The loss of physical activity due to COVID 19 is massive and threatens the independence.
- WHO is cross-referencing fall prevention to other guidelines such as WHO PA, bone health, assistive devices...

Road ahead

➤ [Age Ageing](#). 2021 May 26;afab076. doi: 10.1093/ageing/afab076. Online ahead of print.

New horizons in falls prevention and management for older adults: a global initiative

Manuel Montero-Odasso ^{1 2 3}, Nathalie van der Velde ⁴, Neil B Alexander ⁵, Clemens Becker ⁶, Hubert Blain ⁷, Richard Camicioli ⁸, Jacqueline Close ^{9 10}, Leilei Duan ¹¹, Gustavo Duque ¹², David A Ganz ¹³, Fernando Gómez ¹⁴, Jeffrey M Hausdorff ^{15 16 17}, David B Hogan ¹⁸, Jose R Jauregui ¹⁹, Rose Anne Kenny ²⁰, Lewis A Lipsitz ²¹, Pip A Logan ²², Stephen R Lord ^{23 24}, Louise Mallet ²⁵, David R Marsh ²⁶, Finbarr C Martin ²⁷, Koen Milisen ^{28 29}, Alice Nieuwboer ³⁰, Mirko Petrovic ³¹, Jesper Ryg ³², Ervin Sejdic ³³, Cathie Sherrington ³⁴, Dawn A Skelton ³⁵, Mark Speechley ^{3 36}, Maw Pin Tan ^{37 38}, Chris Todd ^{39 40}, Tischa van der Cammen ⁴¹, Joe Verghese ^{42 43}, Nellie Kamkar ¹, Yanina Sarquis-Adamson ¹, Tahir Masud ^{32 44},
Task Force on Global Guidelines for Falls in Older Adults

Affiliations [+ expand](#)

PMID: 34038522 DOI: [10.1093/ageing/afab076](#)

Water and Wine

Randomized Controlled Trial > N Engl J Med. 2020 Nov 5;383(19):1848-1859.

doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa2001500.

Screening and Intervention to Prevent Falls and Fractures in Older People

Sarah E Lamb ¹, Julie Bruce ¹, Anower Hossain ¹, Chen Ji ¹, Roberta Longo ¹, Ranjit Lall ¹, Chris Bojke ¹, Claire Hulme ¹, Emma Withers ¹, Susanne Finnegan ¹, Ray Sheridan ¹, Keith Willett ¹, Martin Underwood ¹, Prevention of Fall Injury Trial Study Group

Collaborators, Affiliations + expand

PMID: 33211928 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2001500

Randomized Controlled Trial > N Engl J Med. 2020 Jul 9;383(2):129-140.

doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa2002183.

A Randomized Trial of a Multifactorial Strategy to Prevent Serious Fall Injuries

Shalender Bhasin ¹, Thomas M Gill ¹, David B Reuben ¹, Nancy K Latham ¹, David A Ganz ¹, Erich J Greene ¹, James Dziura ¹, Shehzad Basaria ¹, Jerry H Gurwitz ¹, Patricia C Dykes ¹, Siobhan McMahon ¹, Thomas W Storer ¹, Priscilla Gazarian ¹, Michael E Miller ¹, Thomas G Trivison ¹, Denise Esserman ¹, Martha B Carnie ¹, Lori Goehring ¹, Maureen Fagan ¹, Susan L Greenspan ¹, Neil Alexander ¹, Jocelyn Wiggins ¹, Fred Ko ¹, Albert L Siu ¹, Elena Volpi ¹, Albert W Wu ¹, Jeremy Rich ¹, Stephen C Waring ¹, Robert B Wallace ¹, Carri Casteel ¹, Neil M Resnick ¹, Jay Magaziner ¹, Peter Charpentier ¹, Charles Lu ¹, Katy Araujo ¹, Haseena Rajeevan ¹, Can Meng ¹, Heather Allore ¹, Brooke F Brawley ¹, Rich Eder ¹, Joanne M McGloin ¹, Eleni A Skokos ¹, Pamela W Duncan ¹, Dorothy Baker ¹, Chad Boulton ¹, Rosaly Correa-de-Araujo ¹, Peter Peduzzi ¹, STRIDE Trial Investigators

Collaborators, Affiliations + expand

PMID: 32640131 PMCID: PMC7421468 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2002183

[Free PMC article](#)

Discussion points

Partnering

Networking

Value based approaches

Emerging new strategies

- EUGMS – October 2021
- Auckland fall prevention meeting – December 2021
- EU Falls Festival in Leuven – April 2022