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**El efecto del miedo a caídas en la participación social de adultos independientes de edad avanzada**

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Introduction: For the elderly experiencing falls brings as a consequence, at the societal level, an increase in the cost of health services, and it diminishes quality of life and social participation in their occupational contexts. Fear of experiencing a fall can produce in the elderly self restrictive behavior in their ADL's (B & I), limiting independence and social participation in the community.

Objective: The present study explored the relationship between fear of experiencing a fall and level of social participation of a group of well elderly, including identifying differences by gender, age and previous fall experiences.

Methods: A cross-sectional correlational exploratory design was used, with a sample of 69 elderly, 65 years and older. The Spanish version of the Falls Efficacy Scale International was administered to assess fear of falling (Yardley et al., 2005). Level of social participation was assessed with the Puerto Rican Activity Card Sort (Orellano, 2007). The Sociodemographic and Falls History Questionnaire was designed and administered (Arizmendi et al., 2007).

Results: Data evidenced that a negative correlation ( $r=-.254$ ) exists between fear of falling and level of social participation for this group. For those who had experienced falls during the past 5 (five) years a similar effect was observed. As a group women were more prone to diminish their level of social participation because of their fear of falling, as compared to the group of men. Age was not found to be a determining factor for the participants to experience fear of falling and as a consequence of this diminishing their level of social participation.

Conclusion and Contribution: This investigation demonstrates the importance of evaluating the perception of self efficacy of the elderly in relation to their real abilities, guiding them in designing new strategies to maintain and promote social participation in this population. The findings of this study provide a preliminary database for the development of intervention approaches for the prevention of falls, with special focus on those who have experienced falls, since they can be prone to exhibit fear of falling, and as a consequence be at risk of limiting their social participation in the community.