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Identifying risk factors for falls in the home environment in Slovenia

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Introduction:

Environmental factors and changes related to aging are potential risk factors for falls. Approximately one in ten falls results in a serious injury. The aim of this study was to establish the main risk factors in the home environment and the main risk factors associated with the person.

Methods:

121 subjects aged 65 years and over were assessed in their homes. We performed Falls Risk Assessment Tool, Home Fast and Individual Environmental Checklist assessment tools. Firstly, we analysed risks associated with the person. Secondly, environmental risk factors were analysed.

Results:

According Falls Risk Assessment Tool 28.6% subjects were at low risk for falls, 57.1% subjects were at medium and 14.3% were at high risk of falls.

In the low risk group all risk factors were below 30%, except for the doormat in the hallway 41.8%, slippery floor 36.4%, thick doormat 43.6% and no grab rails in the bathroom 67.3%. In the medium risk group more than 55% had slippery floor, 35% had thick doormat, 39% reported problems going in/out of bed, 40.7% had problems getting up from the sofa, 35.6% could not reach light switch from the bed, 72.9% had no grab rails, 42.4% had problems reaching objects in the kitchen, 67.8% did not have markings on the stairs and 22% did not have proper footwear.

In the high risk group 71.4% reported having slippery floor, 42.9 had thick doormat, 71.4% had problems going in/out of bed, 57.1% had problems getting out of sofa, 42.9% had bad lightening, 42.9% could not reach light switch from the bed, 57.1% had no grab rails in bathroom, 58.7% had no non-slip mat in the bath/shower, 42.9% had their bathroom far from the bedroom and also had difficulty reaching objects in the kitchen.

Conclusion:

The analysis of the findings showed that the number and type of environmental risk factors increased with personal risk, which is contrary to our hypothesis.

Contribution for practice:

Planning for adaptations and consequently prevention of falls in the home environment is a great challenge in occupational therapy.