Digital toolkit aims to prevent falls amongst the elderly

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Credit: Keele University

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has endorsed a new online toolkit developed by researchers at Keele University, which aims to prevent falls amongst the elderly that cost the NHS more than £2 billion a year in total.

The Falls Risk Assessment Toolkit identifies patients at risk of falls and, potentially unplanned hospital admissions, and is available to all UK healthcare professionals to access, to allow them to implement a review process of patients at risk of potentially falling.

More than 50 per cent of 80-year-olds fall each year and one in three over-65s.

Research suggests that in the 12 months after a fall the cost of hospital, community and social care services for a patient is almost four times higher than the original hospital admission itself. For example, the community care costs alone increase by 160 per cent after a fall.

The toolkit was co-developed by the Centre for Medicines Optimisation at Keele University and Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group.

Professor Stephen Chapman from Keele University said: "Falls are the largest cause of emergency hospital admissions for older people in the UK and are estimated to cost the NHS more than £2 billion per year.

"However, many falls are preventable. Removing hazards, addressing deterioration in muscle strength, balance and vision, and a medication review of psychotropic medicines will all reduce a person's risk of falling."

The toolkit supports the recommendations relating to preventing falls which are outlined in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines Falls in Older People.

Bharat Patel, who was Head of Medicines Management and Primary Care at Walsall CCG when he helped to develop the Falls Risk Assessment Toolkit said: "The toolkit is designed to be simple and easy to use.

"In practice, the whole healthcare team can proactively implement a review process whereby vulnerable patients can be identified, receive appropriate care and thus reduce their risk of falling."

The toolkit is free to use for healthcare professionals, and is available at www.fallsrisk.co.uk.

Provided by Keele University

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