
NTDB™ data points

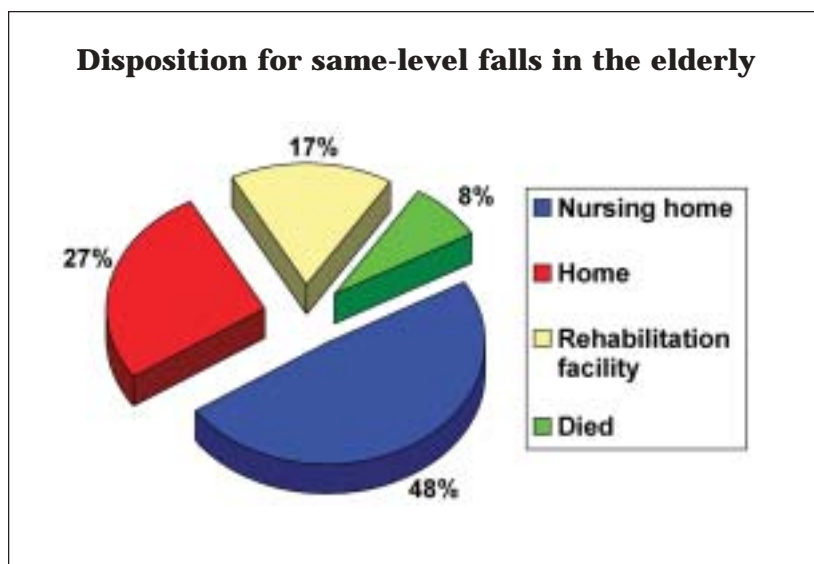
I've fallen and I can't get up

by Richard J. Fantus, MD, FACS, Chicago, IL, and John Fildes, MD, FACS, Las Vegas, NV

The U.S. population is aging at a considerable rate. In 2003, there were nearly 36 million people aged 65 years and older accounting for 12 percent of the total population. Over the last century, those in the older population grew from 3 million to 35 million. Starting in 2011, the baby boomers will begin turning 65. By the year 2030, those in the older population are projected to be twice as many in number than their counterparts in 2000. They will account for more than 71 million, representing nearly 20 percent of the total U.S. population.

Every day the public is reminded of this trend as an increasing number of television commercials targets this demographic group. There are numerous pharmaceutical commercials for medications relevant to a maturing population, in addition to advertisements for lift chairs and the "I've fallen and I can't get up" advertisement for health monitoring products.

People work hard during most of their adult life and look forward to a time when they can retire and take part in some of the activities they may have put off while they were part of the workforce. However, along with the rewards of reaching retirement age are the realities of change in an individual's physical attributes. For example, reduction in organ reserves and



alterations in physiology put elderly people who experience a traumatic event at greater risk when compared with a younger individual exposed to a similar traumatic event.

A seemingly mild traumatic event mechanism would be a same-level fall, such as a fall from a standing position. There is a series of external cause of injury codes (E codes) for falls that encompasses this group.

The records contained in the National Trauma Data Bank™ *Annual Report 2004* show that there are more than 12,000 records of patients aged 65 and older. These patients spent 8,000

days in the intensive care unit and 3,500 days on the ventilator in 2004. Their hospital charges were close to \$230 million and, according to the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, by 2020 this will escalate to \$32 billion per year. Nearly half (48%) of the elderly trauma victims in the NTDB who had experienced trauma from a same-level fall were discharged to a nursing home, 17 percent went to a rehabilitation facility, 8 percent died, and 27 percent were discharged home. These data are depicted in the graph on this page.

The reasons for falls in elderly persons are numerous; they include balance dysfunction, reaching for a high shelf, slipping on wet floors or throw rugs, and effects of prescribed medications, though such falls can also occur simply because a room has poor lighting. Many of these are preventable with proper evaluation of the home environment.

For more information on falls

in the home, there are numerous Web sites such as <http://www.nsc.org/issues/fallstop.htm>. It is up to all people with elderly family members to assist them with evaluating their environment and making it as safe as possible. After all, no one wants to hear the phrase, "I've fallen and I can't get up."

Throughout the year, we will be highlighting these data

through brief monthly reports in the *Bulletin*. The full NTDB Annual Report, Version 4.0 is available on the ACS Web site as a PDF file and a PowerPoint® presentation at <http://www.ntdb.org>. If you are interested in submitting your trauma center's data, contact Melanie L. Neal, Manager, NTDB, at mneal@facs.org.

Child care available at Clinical Congress

Attendees at this year's ACS Clinical Congress in San Francisco, CA (October 16-20), can bring their entire family to the meeting. By popular demand, Camp ACS makes its return to the Congress. ACCENT on

Children's Arrangements, Inc., has planned a children's activity center and youth tours for the children of Clinical Congress attendees. ACCENT is a nationally recognized professional child care company that pro-

vides on-site children's activities in a nurturing, safe, and educational environment. For further information, please visit the Web site at www.facs.org/clincon2005/social/campacs.html.

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#S7 Dbl. Gold Filled 575	NECKTIE	MAN'S BOW TIE
#S8 Solid 14K Gold 5150	#S16A Dark Blue 535	(UNTIED) (Not Shown)
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