



Curtin University



Faculty of Health Sciences

2020 Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarships

Strategic Project Profile

PROJECT TITLE: The epidemiology of ambulance attended falls patients in Western Australia

FIELD OF RESEARCH CODE: 1110

PROJECT SYNOPSIS: Falls are a major cause of unintentional trauma. The World Health Organisation estimate falls to be the second leading cause of unintentional injury deaths worldwide. Falls are the most common reason an ambulance is called in Western Australia (WA), and the most common cause of major trauma transported by ambulances in metropolitan Perth. One out of eight (12.5%) emergency ambulance incidents in Perth is dispatched as a fall, totalling almost 18,000 cases per year - more than traffic injuries (3.7%), assaults (2.5%) and stroke (2.5%) combined. Among falls patients transported by ambulance with major trauma, 25% do not survive 30 days. Falls are often associated with age as a risk factor but they can occur at any stage of life. Yet, the picture of community-based falls in WA is largely incomplete, especially in the pre-hospital setting.

It is important to better understand fall patients and risk factors for falls to support both interventions to prevent falls but also to optimise the pre-hospital treatment and care of falls patients. A systematic review of the pre-hospital care of serious trauma patients who died, (many of whom were likely falls patients), identified that 5-11%

of the deaths were “definitely preventable” and 26-43% were “potentially preventable”, predominantly through improved pre-hospital treatment and management.

In addition to not having a clear description of the cohort of falls patients that are attended by ambulances in WA, repeated falls (by the same patients) are well documented in other populations but in WA it is not known what proportion of ambulance-attendances are for repeat falls. Also unknown are other important characteristics of this vulnerable group, such as who is a greater risk of repeated falls, and what patterns repeat falls take after each patient’s first fall.

The candidate will start by conducting a systematic review of the pre-hospital management of ambulance-attended repeat fallers. This will be followed by an analysis of St John WA ambulance data to describe both ambulance-attended falls in WA generally and also, specifically, ambulance-attendances for repeat falls.

WHAT MINIMAL ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS EXPECTED BY THE CANDIDATE BE COMPETITIVE:

Honours 1 or 2A, or a Masters with a significant research component, in a health related field. Proficiency with MS Office (WORD, Excel and PowerPoint).

Candidates with experience at managing large datasets and/or extracting data would be advantaged, as would candidates with clinical experience.

Students are advised to contact the Project Lead listed below prior to submission of their scholarship application to discuss their suitability to be involved in this strategic project.

PROJECT LEAD CONTACT

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