The 6-PACK falls prevention project
Falls and bone health team
The 6-PACK project

- At the time the study was conducted, this study was the world’s largest falls prevention randomised controlled trial (RCT);
- Includes more than 80,000 patient ward admissions from over 60,000 patients;
- Brings together researchers from across Australia to evaluate the effectiveness of the 6-PACK falls prevention program for reducing falls and fall-related injuries in acute hospitals.

Project aims

1. Determine if the 6-PACK program can achieve meaningful reductions in falls and fall-related injuries;
2. Determine the cost-effectiveness of the 6-PACK program; and
3. Investigate implementation of the 6-PACK program on the participating intervention wards including barriers, enablers and sustainability of the program.

The problem: Falls and fall injuries

The demand for an effective fall prevention program continues to be of interest to both Australian and international hospitals. This is fuelled by an increased awareness of the serious threat that falls pose to the healthcare system and wellbeing of older people.

Patient in-hospital falls are the most common patient adverse event accounting for almost 40 per cent of all reported incidents. They place a significant burden on clinical staff and the utilisation of hospital resources.1 Patients who fall in hospital have up to an 11 day increase in their length of stay and double the hospitalisation costs of age and gender matched non-fallers.2 Australian studies have reported that up to 60 per cent of falls in acute general medical and surgical wards result in injury.3

A prior 9-year evaluation of the 6-PACK program found a 50 per cent reduction of falls in the second year after implementation; this reduction was sustained for 5 years.4

Who was involved?

The cluster randomised controlled trial recruited 24 wards from six acute hospitals across Victoria and New South Wales. Wards that were found eligible to participate in the study had been identified by their associated hospital as having a problem with falls. Hospital ethics committees provided consent for all patients on participating wards to be included as participants of this study.

Wards were randomly allocated to either intervention (12 wards) or control (12 wards). Intervention wards implemented the 6-PACK falls prevention program while the control wards continued with usual care practice.

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The 6-PACK program is a targeted nurse delivered falls prevention program designed specifically for the acute hospital setting. The program includes a validated falls risk assessment tool (TNH-STRATIFY) and a selection from 6 simple nurse delivered interventions.

Implementation of the program was tailored to the needs of each hospital and supported by the research team with the use of a standardised implementation guide, hospital based site clinical leader and ward champions. Key implementation strategies used by hospitals included staff education, practice audits, reminders, and feedback throughout the cluster RCT.
This project team brings together some of Australia’s leading falls prevention researchers.

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- A/Professor Caroline Brand, Monash University
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- Professor Terry Haines, Monash University
- Professor Sandy Brauer, The University of Queensland
- Professor Mari Botti, Deakin University
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