ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND:

Fall/instability is one of the five geriatric giants’ aside immobility, incontinence, intellectual impairment and iatrogenesis according to Isaac Bernard. Falls are a common health problem among the elderly in many countries (especially developing countries like Nigeria). More often than not, certain risk factors/co-morbidities predisposes elderly individuals to falls. Falls also cause considerable morbidity and mortality and affect the quality of life of many elderly individuals.

OBJECTIVE

To determine the prevalence assess risk factors and of falls in elderly patients attending the General Outpatient Clinic in Lagos University Teaching Hospital.

METHODOLOGY

A hospital-based descriptive study was conducted to select elderly patients aged 60 years and above in the general outpatient clinic of Lagos University teaching hospital, Lagos, Nigeria (n=310). An interviewer administered questionnaire was use to assess the occurrence, number and consequences of falls in the previous 12 months. They were also assessed for cognition, depression, functional status, medical condition, gait and balance, visual acuity and nutritional status.

RESULTS

The prevalence of falls was discovered to be 31.6%. Upon bivariate analysis of the fall risk factors; level of education (0.041), poor sight (0.020), geriatric depression score (0.045) and postural hypotension (0.019) were statistically significant associated with history of falls (P<0.05).
Respondents with a higher educational level were less likely to fall than those with lower educational level. The findings from this study also showed that 88% of the respondents had normal cognition and over 99% of the elders had no functional impairment.

**CONCLUSION**

Falls are an important health problem among the elderly in Nigeria. This study shows that falls are associated with low education, poor vision, depression and postural hypotension. These therefore call for an intervention in form of hospital-based fall prevention measures targeted at those at risk in order to reduce the rate of falls among the elderly.