Reviewer's report

Title: Falls Assessment Clinical Trial (FACT): design, interventions, recruitment strategies and participant characteristics

Version: Date: 4 March 2007

Reviewer: Keith D Hill

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a well written paper addressing some very important issues to those involved in both research and clinical practice in the area of falls prevention. It gives a very good overview of the current status of falls prevention evidence, particularly the gap relating to falls prevention in primary care settings, and describes a well designed methodology of a study which aims to address current gaps. It also discusses a common problem in this type of research - that of subject recruitment - and compares two strategies used to address recruitment issues, and compares their relative merit. Outcome measures have been selected based on well validated, and recommended definitions and tools from the international literature, including some recommended through the ProFaNE consortium.

The paper presents results from the baseline assessment for this study, which provide a comprehensive picture of the type of people recruited through primary care. The sample profile clearly show a moderate level of falls risk, in particular almost a third of the sample are taking psychotropic medications, and balance measures indicate moderate impairment. The range of proposed interventions and outcomes are described, as is details of an economic evaluation, although the results of these are not included in this first paper on the study.

The discussion succinctly reviews the study results in the context of other literature, and highlights the key areas where this paper contributes to current knowledge.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. In the abstract (results section) and Table 3, falls in the preceding 12 months are reported using mean (SD). The distribution of data on falls is often not normally distributed. If this data is not normally distributed, then data should be presented as median and Interquartile range.
2. Timed up and go scores (reported in table 3) are also quite high, indicating quite poor mobility - again, can the authors confirm that this data is normally distributed, and that there are not a couple of outliers distorting this mean (sd). If the data is skewed, then again median and IQR would be more appropriate to report.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Most of the measures used are well described. The authors report using a "falls risk assessment" (p 8), but do not describe whether this is based on a validated tool, and what it consists of. This information is likely to be of interest to readers.
2. (p 8) Is there a reference for the brief osteoporosis risk screen that can be reported.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests