Reviewer’s report

Title: A national survey of services for the prevention and management of falls in the UK

Version: 2 Date: 12 June 2008

Reviewer: Judy A. Stevens

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction

1. Multiple references are made to “recommended standards” or “NICE standards”. Although these are referenced, it would help the reader if these standards were at least summarized in the text.

2. The authors should distinguish between fall interventions that have strong evidence of effectiveness (i.e., exercise, medication modification), interventions with little evidence (i.e., home modification alone, footwear, hearing, cardiovascular factors).

3. It would be more useful if the authors described the provision of multi-factorial interventions that included effective components and secondarily, those that included additional elements that may be poorly supported by falls prevention research.

4. Para 2: The authors state that they were examining the provision of five key interventions (gait/balance, vision, medication, home hazards and bone health.) However, they later include additional interventions. Please describe and give justifications for including surgery, fluid or nutrition therapy, and social environment as fall interventions.

5. The authors should explain why they included bone health an intervention. While bone health clearly affects fracture risk, it is not a fall risk factor.

Methods

6. Please define “bespoke methods”.

Results

7. Figure 2 is not self-explanatory. Clearly label both axis in Figure 2 and provide a better description in the figure’s title.

8. Table 2. Clarify what components are being assessed by presenting the multi-factorial risk assessment in Table 2 as a matrix. Similarly, present the interventions in a matrix format.

9. Bone health is mentioned first as a referral for people at high risk for falls, than
later as a fall intervention (p8). Is simple referral considered an intervention? Why?

Discussion:
10. It would improve the paper if more discussion was provided about known effective fall interventions, to put the author’s findings into context. No mention is made to the results of the Cochrane Reviews of fall interventions or to specific interventions shown to be effective through randomized controlled trials.

Minor Essential Revision
1. As this will be read by people outside the UK, it would be very helpful for the reader if the authors would write out each term or organizational name before using acronyms, in both the abstract and the body of the manuscript.

2. Although a 76% response rate is good, it is not sufficient to justify the authors’ statement that non-response bias is likely to be small. Please discuss the effect of this potential bias.

Discretionary Revisions
Introduction
1. Para 1, line 13: add “and” before “referral for correction…”
2. Para 1, last sentence: remove “both”.
3. The conclusion is simply a repeat of the last paragraph in the discussion.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.