Reviewer's report

Title: Reporting of complex interventions in clinical trials: development of a taxonomy to classify and describe fall-prevention interventions.

Version: 1 Date: 8 February 2011

Reviewer: John Campbell

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
No major revisions are required.

This paper provides a taxonomy to describe fall prevention interventions and the processes used to develop the taxonomy.

The number of fall prevention trials has increased markedly over the last 15 years and, over more recent years, there have been a number of systematic reviews, meta-analyses and guidelines based on these trials. Many, but certainly not all, of the trials have been complex. They have occurred in different settings with research participants coming from different backgrounds, community and institutional, and with single or multiple interventions. Because of the lack of an accepted taxonomy, results from these trials have often been difficult to compare.

The taxonomy presented in this paper will be very important in improving both the design and reporting of fall prevention trials. The taxonomy is comprehensive but the authors have achieved the balance they wanted between "brevity and simplicity against complexity and detail" The taxonomy and guide have been tested against selected papers and the reviewers were consistent in their classification. The taxonomy will need to undergo further revisions with use and the authors plan for a review in five years.

The taxonomy will certainly be of value in reporting trials but should also be an important check list for those designing studies.

The authors have also described the process they have used in developing the taxonomy. It has been a comprehensive, thorough process drawing on professional expertise and a detailed knowledge of the literature. The description of the process will be useful for those developing a taxonomy for trials in other conditions.

This valuable work has been made possible through the Prevention of Falls Network Europe (ProFaNE) Thematic Network and is one of the major products of this initiative.

Minor essential revisions.
1) the consensus panel included 33 representatives but only 30 are named.
2) there are typographical errors in the first two points of table 1
3) in the last paragraph, first sentence of the discussion the 2009 Cochrane review should be cited, not the 2003 review.

4) interventions in the paper are always described as complex and certainly not all are. The taxonomy should be of value in all fall prevention interventions. In the paper either "complex" should be omitted or interventions described as "some of which are complex".

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest 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