

Cognitive-behavioural therapy-based intervention to reduce fear of falling in older people: therapy development and randomised controlled trial – the Strategies for Increasing Independence, Confidence and Energy (STRIDE) study

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Plain English summary

The STRIDE study

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Plain English summary

'Fear of falling' refers to some of the psychological and social difficulties faced by older people with falls. The problem is common, affecting up to 85% of older people who fall. There is little good evidence to guide us on how to treat fear of falling, but some research suggests that talking treatments used for depression and anxiety, in particular cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), may be helpful.

We developed a new CBT intervention (CBTi) to try and help older people with this problem, and then compared the new intervention with care as usual in patients with fear of falling. To try and make this more affordable for the UK NHS, we trained health-care assistants to deliver it. We examined whether or not the new intervention could improve falls, injuries, quality of life, depression, loneliness and physical abilities. We also looked at how acceptable this intervention was to those having the treatment and to those delivering it, and whether or not it provided value for money.

Fear of falling reduced significantly for those having CBTi, as did depression scores. There was no change in any of the other things that we measured. Although our new intervention was acceptable to older people, there was no evidence that the new intervention was cost-effective. Our new intervention reduces fear of falling in older people and may help improve depression but not other measures. Future research should focus on whether or not such an intervention, delivered with physical training, helps improve fear of falling further.

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