

A multidomain decision support tool to prevent falls in older people: the FinCH cluster RCT

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

The FinCH cluster RCT

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Plain English summary

Falls in care home residents are common, unpleasant, costly and hard to prevent. We tested whether or not the Guide to Action for falls prevention in Care Homes (GtACH) programme was effective in preventing falls. In this programme, care home staff were systematically trained and supported in the assessment of residents' risk of falling and the generation of a falls reduction care plan. We undertook a randomised controlled trial comparing the GtACH programme with usual care, which does not involve this systematic attention to falls prevention. We also undertook a process evaluation, observing organisational and care processes, and an economic study to evaluate value for money.

A total of 39 care homes were randomly allocated to the GtACH programme and 45 care homes were randomly allocated to usual care, involving a total of 1657 residents. The main comparison between the two arms was the rate of falls during months 4–6 after randomisation, when we expected any effect to be at its peak. We also assessed the falls rates before and 6 months after this period. We measured activity and dependency levels, as it was important to be sure that any reduction in the rate of falls was not achieved through restrictive care practices.

We saw a 43% reduction in the falls rates of the GtACH programme participants during months 4–6, without observing any reduction in residents' activity or dependency. Care home staff and relatives were positive about the GtACH programme. The GtACH programme was good value for money, as it was likely to be cost-effective. The effect of the programme waned over months 6–12, which may be because some staff did not embed the GtACH programme in their usual practice routines, and awareness levels may have dropped.

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This report

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