Systematic reviews on preventing fall-related injuries in older people

Falls are a common cause of injury in older people. Injuries caused by falls, such as broken bones or head injury, may result in disability, premature death, or a lower quality of life. Three systematic reviews currently published in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews evaluate the effectiveness of interventions for preventing falls and fall-related injuries in older adults.\(^1\) \(^3\) One of these reviews has recently been updated and the findings are presented below. The other two reviews are currently being updated, and are expected to be published later in 2008. One of these reviews has been divided into two, and the new protocols have been published.\(^4\) \(^5\)

**POPULATION-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF FALL-RELATED INJURIES IN OLDER PEOPLE**

This review included studies with population-based interventions, which are defined as interventions that may target an individual (wearing a hip protector, practicing physical activity, home hazard reduction, and training for council services personnel, healthcare workers, and public space and housing planners). The sixth study examined the effect of one intervention, group tai chi exercises, on the incidence of injuries in older people in rural villages in Taiwan.

All six studies found an overall reduction in fall-related injuries among members of the intervention populations. For three studies a reduction in injuries was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level for some subpopulations. The relative reduction in fall-related injuries across the six studies ranged from 6% to 33%.

On the basis of the findings of the included studies, the review authors concluded that population-level interventions can reduce the incidence of fall-related injuries in older populations. The full review can be found on the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews.

The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews contains over 3000 systematic reviews and is available at www.thecochranelibrary.com.

The main review highlighted in this article is registered to the Cochrane Injuries Group (www.injuries.cochrane.org). The other reviews mentioned are registered to the Cochrane Bone, Joint and Muscle Trauma Group (www.bjmtg.cochrane.org). The work of both groups involves preparing, maintaining, and promoting the accessibility of systematic reviews on different aspects of the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of injury. People interested in contributing to this work can contact me, the Review Group Coordinator of the Injuries Group, at emma.sydenham@lshstm.ac.uk, or Lindsey Elstub, the Review Group Coordinator of the Bone, Joint and Muscle Trauma Group at lindsey.elstub@manchester.ac.uk.

**REFERENCES**