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Perceived functional visual ability and risk of falling among independently living seniors

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Falls and fall injuries among today's seniors are an important public health issue especially since it is known that old age is an independent risk factor of falling. It is a major problem since the ageing population is estimated to increase worldwide. Deterioration in quality in life such as fear of falling, loss of confidence and social isolation caused by accidental falls is calculated to cost even more than the direct costs such as medical treatment, healthcare and rehabilitation. Visual impairment occurs increasingly as people age and is also besides age one of the most predictive factors of falling. When measuring visual ability usually only performance-based measurements such as visual acuity are considered but nothing regarding a person's functional visual ability in daily life is taken into account. Therefore, the purpose of our study was to assess the perceived vision-related health among independently living seniors using the 25-item National Eye Institute Visual Function Questionnaire (NEI VFQ-25) and to investigate whether there was any association between the vision-related health status and falls. As many as 43% of the 212 seniors in our study reported falling at least once. Our study indicated that the seniors had an impaired perceived vision-related health status where general health was the only NEI VFQ-25 variable significantly associated with falls. Among the men though near and distance activities, vision-specific social functioning, role difficulties and dependency, colour and peripheral vision were related to falls. Therefore the NEI VFQ-25 might be a useful tool when identifying risk of falling.

Biography

Jeanette Kallstrand Eriksson is an RN and ophthalmic nurse who completed her PhD in Medical Science with a specialization in Healthcare Sciences at Örebro University in May 2014. She is also responsible for the education at an advanced level for RNs to become ophthalmic nurses at Halmstad University in Sweden; the only education at this level (MScN) in ophthalmic nursing in Scandinavia.

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