

[IMAGE]

Falling for Chiropractic

Actually, the correct phrase in this case might be "falling without chiropractic," at least if the results of a recent study by a team of Australian researchers are accurate.

The elderly have a lot to put up with: eyes that may not see as clearly as when they were younger; minds that might not be as lucid as they once were; and bones that are weaker and more prone to breaking. In fact, falls are the sixth leading cause of death among the elderly population. Does the spine play a role in preventing falls?

Researchers recently examined common causes of falls and possible interventions, including the potential influence of a healthy spine. The most common fall-related injuries are fractures, especially of the femur, neck and soft tissue. Recent studies have yielded links from the degenerative spine to balance disturbances, the neck and verticality; and research is ongoing to determine whether the cervical spine is associated with balance that may be slightly "off" when a fall occurs.

Researchers suggest simple activities may serve as tests of patient functional performance. These include sitting, standing, reaching, leaning over, looking over the shoulder, turning in a complete circle and stepping, and a simple gauge of leaving a chair, walking 3 meters, and returning to the chair.

Aside from the normal challenges facing the elderly, one precaution is in order: Seek a spine specialist in order to maintain your back, posture and equilibrium. And what better spine specialist than a doctor of chiropractic? Your chiropractor can advise you on the best ways to prevent yourself from losing your balance - and possibly more.

To learn more about ways to stay healthy into the golden years, go to www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/senior.

Reference:

Walsh JM, Polus BI, Webb MN. The role of the cervical spine in balance and risk of falling in the elderly. *Chiropractic Journal of Australia* March 2004;34(1):19-22.

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