

## Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2019

### Fall Risk in Community Dwelling Persons with Cognitive Impairment and Dementia- A Cross-sectional Survey

April Scott MPA<sup>1</sup>, Joanne Maher MSW<sup>1</sup>, Kenna Little BA<sup>1</sup>, Linda Whiteside<sup>1</sup>, Debbie Williams<sup>1</sup>, Carolyn Ham BA, PTA<sup>2</sup> and Victoria Panzer PhD<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alzheimer's Association- Washington State Chapter, Lynnwood, WA; <sup>2</sup>Division of Prevention and Community Health, Washington State Dept. of Health, Tumwater, WA; <sup>3</sup>Brookside Research & Development, Freeland, WA

**Background-** The risk of falls is 25-30% in healthy older adults, but reportedly as high as 90% in Persons with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (PwD) in residential care settings. Little is known about fall risk in PwD who are still living at home.

**Methods-** An anonymous cross-sectional self-administered paper survey was provided to PwD or their Caregivers attending educational and social programs or support groups. Respondents were asked to provide the number of falls for three periods: Last Year (LY), Previous Year (PY), Last Three Months (L3M) and if any fall during that period caused injury. They estimated frequency of Loss of Balance (LoB- Never, Occasionally, Monthly, Weekly, Daily). Fall risk was calculated using falls history based upon: number of falls, presence of injury and fall recency.

**Results- Demographics-** The majority of the respondents (n=105) were female (66, males=29) Caregivers (90, Persons with memory loss=15). Age was not requested in this public setting.

**Falls History-** In the Last Year (LY), the Previous Year (PY), and the Last Three Months (L3M) the most common response was No Falls (#Respondents =41, 45, 65 respectively). Interestingly, the next most frequent response for LY and PY was Three or more (3+), followed closely by One (LY-3+=25, One=23; PY-3+=19, One=18). For L3M the second most common response was One (#Respondents=24), Two, 3+ or Don't Know were not common (6,5,5 respectively). Most falls were without injury (LY=85, PY=80, L3M=95). As would be expected given these data, Fall Risk was frequently Age-appropriate (37), followed by High (27), Elevated (23) and Moderate (16).

**Loss of Balance (LoB) or Near Fall Frequency-** Most respondents noted that these occurred occasionally (40) or Never (33) and occasional LoB was associated with Age appropriate fall risk (13).

**Conclusion-** In PwD living at home this survey shows that falls have not occurred; are frequent, but not injurious or there has only been one. These results suggest that falls play a significant role in whether the PwD remains at home and that evidence-based falls prevention interventions for PwD could make a significant contribution.

*Support: National Institutes of Health grant AG058399 to Brookside Research & Development,  
Victoria Panzer, Principal Investigator*