



Editorial

Fragility fracture: A global call to action



Patients with fragility fractures are the most common orthopaedic inpatients. Despite the prevalence of the condition, orthopaedic nurses have seldom received education relating specifically to caring for this group of patients, whether that care is provided in hospital, rehabilitation facilities or when accessing community services.

In 2012, representatives of the International Collaboration of Orthopaedic Nursing (ICON) Hip Fracture Work Group collaboratively authored an evidence based international consensus document; “Acute nursing care of the older adult with fragility hip fracture” (Maher et al 2012, 2013). This work provided the first comprehensive review of nursing and allied health professional literature and guidance relating to the management of patients following hip fracture. It was exceptionally well received by the orthopaedic nursing community and beyond. Work has been ongoing over the last year to update this important guidance for best practice and the update is published in this issue of the International Journal of Orthopaedic and Trauma Nursing (Meehan et al., 2019).

Since the first consensus document, much has been done to build on this important work, including developing a tool for, and conducting, an international audit. The audit explored the extent to which evidence based practices, focused on nurse-sensitive quality indicators, are reflected in nursing policies and protocols that guide nursing care in a small sample of facilities around the world (MacDonald et al., 2018). At almost the same time, a paper entitled “Nursing care of fragility fractures”, authored by ICON member nurses, was published in a special issue of the journal *Injury* (Brent et al., 2018), discussing the benefits and direct impact of specialist nursing care for the patient with a fragility hip fracture.

In August 2018 the Fragility Fracture Network (FFN), an international interprofessional organization aimed at improving the care of patients with fragility fractures and reducing the incidence of secondary fractures worldwide, issued a global call to action (Dreinhöfer et al., 2018). In addition to ICON, an early supporter of FFN, over eighty leading organizations from around the world have responded in support of this global health initiative. The call to action highlights that the global population is currently undergoing the greatest demographic shift in the history of humankind. If our health and social care systems are to withstand this shift, a robust strategy must be devised and an army of healthcare professionals amassed to deliver it. This strategy must transform how we currently treat and rehabilitate people who have sustained fragility fractures, in combination with preventing as many fractures as possible. The latter can be achieved, in part, by ensuring that health systems always respond with appropriate and adequate follow-up to the first fracture to prevent second and subsequent fractures. In short; ‘let the first fracture be the last’.

The case for transformation of the following aspects of care is urged by the call to action:

- Surgical and medical care provided to a person hospitalised with a hip fracture, a painful fracture of the spine and other major fragility fractures
- Prevention of second and subsequent fractures for people who have sustained their first fragility fracture
- Rehabilitation of people whose ability to function is impaired by hip fractures and other major fragility fractures, to restore their mobility and independence.

In 2017, as part of this action plan and in recognising the central role of nursing in this transformation, the FFN initiated a project to develop an education curriculum for fragility fracture nursing care. This project brought together nurses from 25 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, for an intensive two-day workshop to develop the curriculum. One early output from this has been the recent publication of a Fragility Fracture Nursing book (Hertz and Santy-Tomlinson, 2018 - accessed as a free eBook at <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319766805>). The book proffers the aims and learning outcomes and knowledge base for a curriculum for educating nurses on the best practice nursing care for patients with fragility fractures. Such a curriculum needs to be rolled out globally among the nursing workforce who will care for patients following fragility fractures and during their subsequent recovery and rehabilitation along with those at risk of fracture.

These efforts reflect the mission and vision of the ICON, which is to advance musculoskeletal care globally, ensuring universal application of the highest standards of orthopaedic nursing practice and care. The ICON collaborative consists of representatives from 15 national or regional associations of orthopaedic nursing representing 15 countries across 4 continents. The work of the ICON includes: sharing best practices, supporting excellence in education and innovation and fostering strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations. Through the ICON's global network of nurses, efforts continue to enhance care of patients with fragility fracture during all phases of care, from acute through rehabilitation and, critically, in the area of secondary prevention.

References

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