Physical Therapist Assessment of Mobility Predicts Risk of Hospitalization

ALEXANDRIA, VA, January 2, 2019 —Routine assessments of mobility level by a physical therapist can help better identify older adults at highest risk for hospitalization, according to a new study in the journal Physical Therapy (PTJ).

This research provides evidence that insufficient mobility is an important and independent risk factor for hospitalization. Maintaining higher levels of walking ability, balance and leg strength may reduce the risk of being hospitalized, the study suggests, even if a patient has multiple chronic conditions.

The full findings were published today in the January issue of PTJ, the official scientific journal of the American Physical Therapy Association.

The study, led by Jennifer Stevens-Lapsley, PT, PhD, and team at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, evaluated relationships between physical therapist-assessed physical performance and both all-cause and potentially avoidable hospitalizations in the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE).

Data from electronic medical records and hospitalization claims tracked more than 1,000 participants out of Denver-area PACE facilities. Individuals participating in PACE, a rapidly expanding program of the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, receive community-based long-term care services from an interdisciplinary team of health professionals including physical therapists.

“The results of this study illustrate the importance of routinely assessing mobility within long-term care settings,” said Jason R. Falvey, PT, DPT, PhD. Falvey is a board-certified clinical specialist in geriatric physical therapy and was a lead author and a PhD candidate in the Rehabilitation Science Program when this work was conducted. “The study also further supports the role of physical therapists as part of the primary care team for medically complex older adults.”

Physical therapists are movement experts who maximize quality of life through prescribed exercise, hands-on care and patient education.

The American Physical Therapy Association represents more than 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and students of physical therapy nationwide. Visit MoveForwardPT.com to learn more about the types of conditions physical therapists treat, and to find a physical therapist in your area.

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