

# TOPIC 1 Patient story Staff perspective



## Patient story

Betty is a 93-year-old lady with a history of falls. Her daughter Barbara talks about what happened when avoidable environmental factors (a cluttered toilet space) interacted with her mother's risk factor of impaired mobility (for which she was using a walker) to cause a fall.



**Watch this short video clip** to see Barbara talk about the impacts for her mother and the family (2 mins, 1 sec) or read the transcript below.



Thank you to First, Do No Harm for facilitating and sharing this patient story.

Mum is 93 and does fall occasionally. As the result of a fall she reluctantly went into hospital.

She was ready to come home after five or six days, and I had the call to say she was dressed, ready for discharge. And then within 20 minutes, I had another call from the hospital to say that unfortunately Mum had had a fall and she wouldn't be coming home. When I got to the hospital I learnt that she'd fallen in the bathroom within her hospital room. There were two or three items of hospital equipment on the bathroom floor; it was so cluttered that she couldn't get out without reversing first. She pushed the toilet seat – which was sitting on the floor as the main obstacle with her foot, and in doing so lost her balance, fell back and smacked her head on the wall.

Mum actually lost her confidence at that point. When she went home from hospital, we had to increase her support. We now have somebody coming in when she showers every morning and we spend a lot more time helping her out ourselves, as well as the caregivers that come and go.

Mum going into hospital as the result of a fall should have put up the warning signs. The staff should have been taking extra care to make sure that she was in a safe environment, particularly when she was mobile, using the bathroom.

## Staff perspective

Patient falls also have an impact on staff and health services. Health professionals often have a sense of dismay and failure when a patient is harmed in a fall, not least because they are aware of the possible outcomes for the patient and family.

**Watch this short video clip** to see health care staff talk about the impact of falls (1 min, 22 sec) or read the transcript below.



Denise Le Lievre (Charge nurse manager, neurosurgery, Auckland City Hospital): *When a patient falls, it breaks your heart. You get a real sick feeling in your stomach.*



Jane Lees (Nurse director, adult, cardiac and cancer services, Auckland DHB): *And the nurses always feel like they perhaps have failed.*



Sandy Blake (Clinical lead, Reducing Harm from Falls programme; director of nursing, Whanganui DHB): *It's very upsetting when our patients become harmed from falling.*



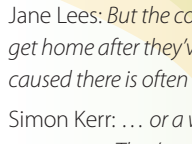
Simon Kerr (Professional leader physiotherapy, Counties Manukau DHB): *The last thing we want, providing care to patients in hospital, is for them to be harmed while they're here.*



Denise Le Lievre: *We have a duty of care to keep patients safe, and unfortunately we don't always achieve it.*



Simon Kerr: *And falls is one of the most common ways that people are hurt, particularly the elderly, when they're in hospital care.*



Dr Shankar Sankaran (Clinical head and consultant physician, Counties Manukau DHB): *To keep one person in a rest home or a private hospital costs about \$30,000 a year, so it is a huge amount of money.*

Jane Lees: *But the cost to the patient is even more. Some patients never even get home after they've had a fall with harm. And even if there's been no harm caused there is often a loss of confidence.*

Simon Kerr: *... or a worsening of fear. We call it kinesiophobia or fear of movement. That's very significant.*

Karen O'Keeffe (Clinical lead, First, Do No Harm): *... and it can really become a socially isolating factor. They don't feel like they're comfortable going out, uneven ground, you know, they consider a lot of things and become quite socially isolated.*

Dr Shankar Sankaran: *Research evidence shows that after a major hip fracture about 25 percent of patients will die within a year after the hip fracture.*