Review Articles

Research Progress on Intervention Measures for Fall Prevention among the Elderly

*Sharon R Lewis[1], Lisa McGarrigle[2], Ewa Klimek Piskorz[1]**

[1] *Institute of Sports Sciences, University of Physical Culture, Kraków, Poland*
[2] *School of Health Sciences, University of Manchester, Manchester Academic Health Science Centre, Manchester, UK*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 25 July 2026
Accepted 31 August 2026

Keywords:
Fall prevention
Older adults
Exercise intervention
Multifactorial intervention
Cognitive-behavioral therapy

ABSTRACT

Falls represent one of the most significant public health challenges facing the aging global population, contributing substantially to morbidity, mortality, and healthcare costs. This review synthesizes recent research progress on intervention measures for fall prevention among older adults, encompassing exercise-based interventions, multifactorial approaches, medication management and deprescribing, digital health technologies, nutritional supplementation, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and environmental modifications. Evidence from systematic reviews and meta-analyses published between 2019 and 2026 demonstrates that exercise interventions, particularly those incorporating balance and strength training, remain the most robustly supported strategy for reducing fall rates. Multifactorial interventions show consistent benefits, especially when actively implemented with exercise and environmental modification components. Emerging digital health technologies offer promising tools for fall detection and prediction, though their clinical effectiveness requires further validation. Medication review and deprescribing of fall-risk-increasing drugs (FRIDs) represent a critical yet underutilized intervention. Vitamin D supplementation at 800–1000 IU/day demonstrates efficacy in fall prevention, particularly among vitamin D-deficient individuals, though the evidence regarding high-dose supplementation remains controversial. Despite the accumulating evidence base, significant implementation gaps persist, highlighting the need for integrated, person-centered approaches that address both intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors. Future research should focus on optimizing intervention delivery, enhancing implementation fidelity, and developing hybrid models that combine technological innovation with evidence-based clinical strategies.

1. Introduction

Falls among older adults constitute a major global public health concern, with approximately one-third of community-dwelling individuals aged 65 years and older experiencing at least one fall annually [1]. The consequences extend beyond physical injuries—including hip fractures, traumatic brain injuries, and soft tissue damage—to encompass profound psychological impacts such as fear of falling, social isolation, and reduced quality of life [2]. The economic burden is substantial, with fall-related healthcare costs representing a significant proportion of geriatric healthcare expenditure worldwide.

The etiology of falls in older adults is multifactorial, involving a complex interplay of intrinsic factors (age-related physiological changes, chronic diseases, cognitive impairment, medication effects) and extrinsic factors (environmental hazards, inadequate lighting, slippery surfaces) [1]. This complexity necessitates comprehensive, multidimensional intervention strategies that address the diverse risk factor profile of each individual.

Over the past decade, substantial research has advanced our understanding of effective fall prevention interventions. The World Guidelines for Falls Prevention and Management among Older Adults (2022) [3] and updated Cochrane reviews [4] have provided evidence-based frameworks for clinical practice. However, the translation of research evidence into routine care remains suboptimal, with significant gaps in implementation fidelity and sustained adherence [5].

This review aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis of recent research progress on intervention measures for fall prevention among older adults, critically evaluating the evidence base for various intervention modalities,

* *Corresponding author: Ewa Klimek Piskorz*
ISSN: 3071-4265/
DOI: 10.64904/202608007

examining implementation challenges, and identifying directions for future research and clinical practice.

2. Methods

This review adopts a narrative review approach to provide a comprehensive evidence map across multiple intervention domains for fall prevention among older adults. Given the breadth of intervention modalities covered—including exercise, multifactorial interventions, medication management, digital health technologies, nutritional supplementation, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and environmental modifications—a narrative synthesis was deemed most appropriate to capture the full spectrum of available evidence and to identify cross-cutting themes and implementation challenges.

2.1. Literature Search Strategy

A systematic search of the literature was conducted across the following electronic databases: PubMed/MEDLINE, Cochrane Library (Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and CENTRAL), Embase, and Web of Science. The search strategy combined Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms and free-text keywords related to falls, older adults, and intervention measures, including: ("falls" OR "accidental falls" OR "fall prevention") AND ("aged" OR "older adults" OR "elderly" OR "geriatric") AND ("intervention" OR "prevention" OR "exercise" OR "multifactorial" OR "medication review" OR "deprescribing" OR "digital health" OR "vitamin D" OR "cognitive behavioral therapy" OR "environmental modification").

2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were eligible for inclusion if they: (1) focused on fall prevention interventions among adults aged 60 years and older; (2) were published in peer-reviewed journals between January 2019 and July 2026; (3) employed systematic review, meta-analysis, randomized controlled trial (RCT), or quasi-experimental designs; and (4) were published in English. Studies were excluded if they: (1) focused exclusively on pediatric or adult populations under 60 years; (2) were case reports, opinion pieces, or conference abstracts without sufficient methodological detail; or (3) addressed fall prevention as a secondary outcome without a primary focus on fall-related measures.

2.3. Study Selection and Data Extraction

Search results were screened by title and abstract, followed by a full-text review of potentially eligible articles. Key data extracted included study design, population characteristics, intervention components, comparison groups, outcome measures (fall rates, fallers, injurious falls, fractures), effect estimates with confidence intervals, and implementation characteristics.

2.4. Quality Assessment

The methodological quality of included systematic reviews was assessed using the AMSTAR 2 (A Measurement Tool to Assess Systematic Reviews) checklist. RCTs were evaluated using the Cochrane Risk of Bias tool (RoB 2). The overall certainty of evidence was graded using the GRADE (Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation) framework where applicable.

3. Exercise-Based Interventions

3.1. Balance and Strength Training

Exercise remains the cornerstone of fall prevention strategies, with the strongest and most consistent evidence base among all intervention modalities. A landmark Cochrane systematic review by Sherrington et al. [4] demonstrated that exercise reduces the rate of falls by 23% and the number of people experiencing falls by 15% among community-dwelling older adults. The most effective exercise programs incorporate challenging balance training, moderate-intensity progressive strength training, and a minimum dose of at least 3 hours per week over 6 months.

Recent systematic reviews have further refined these recommendations [6][7]. Balance and strength-based exercise interventions have been shown to significantly improve physical performance measures, including the Berg Balance Scale (BBS), Timed Up and Go (TUG), Five Times Sit-to-Stand (FTSS), and one-leg stance tests. These improvements in objective measures translate to meaningful reductions in fall incidence, particularly when interventions are sustained over extended periods.

3.2. Tai Chi and Mind-Body Exercises

Tai Chi has emerged as a particularly promising exercise modality for fall prevention. A recent meta-analysis of 21 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) demonstrated that Tai Chi significantly improves balance ability, walking speed, and confidence in preventing falls among healthy older adults [8]. The slow, controlled movements characteristic of Tai Chi enhance proprioception, postural control, and lower limb strength while simultaneously addressing psychological factors such as fear of falling.

A 2026 study examining sub-health symptom clusters among urban older adults revealed that Tai Chi practitioners across all identified clusters (Low Physical-Psychological, Balanced Average, and Cognitive-Social Advantage) had significantly lower fall rates and higher Activity-Specific Balance Confidence (ABC) scores than non-practitioners. Notably, individuals in the highest-risk cluster derived the greatest benefits, with the most pronounced disparity in fall rates (12.2% vs. 92.3%), suggesting that Tai Chi may be particularly valuable for high-risk populations [8].

3.3. Aquatic and Alternative Exercise Modalities

Aquatic resistance training and Pilates have gained attention as alternative exercise modalities that may be particularly suitable for older adults with joint pain or mobility limitations. These interventions reduce joint loading while providing resistance for muscle strengthening. Occupational therapy-led interventions incorporating resistance-based components, including aquatic resistance and Pilates, have demonstrated positive effects on balance, mobility, and self-confidence, though reductions in actual fall rates have been less consistent compared to land-based balance training [7].

3.4. Exercise Dosage and Implementation

The dose-response relationship between exercise and fall prevention has been extensively investigated. Programs delivering at least 3 hours of exercise weekly, maintained for 6 months or longer, yield the most robust fall reduction effects [4]. However, adherence remains a significant challenge, with dropout rates varying considerably across settings. Community-based programs face particular implementation barriers, including transportation difficulties, cost constraints, and lack of sustained

motivation. Recent scoping reviews have identified that rural and regional areas face additional challenges in delivering community-based exercise programs, highlighting the need for innovative delivery models including telehealth and home-based programs [9].

4. Multifactorial Interventions

4.1. Community-Based Multifactorial Approaches

Multifactorial interventions, which involve comprehensive risk assessment followed by tailored interventions addressing identified risk factors, represent a mainstay of fall prevention practice. A landmark systematic review and meta-analysis of 41 trials involving nearly 20,000 participants demonstrated that multifactorial interventions significantly reduce fall rates in both high-risk and healthy older adult groups compared to usual care [10]. The effectiveness of multifactorial interventions depends critically on their components and implementation intensity. Active multifactorial interventions—those involving direct provision of services rather than referral to external agencies—demonstrate superior outcomes. Specifically, active interventions achieved a risk ratio (RR) of 0.64 (95% CI 0.51–0.80) for fall rates, compared to referral-based approaches. Interventions incorporating exercise (RR 0.66; 95% CI 0.54–0.80) and environmental modification (RR 0.65; 95% CI 0.54–0.79) showed particularly strong effects [10].

4.2. Emergency Department-Initiated Interventions

Fall prevention interventions initiated from the Emergency Department (ED) have garnered increasing attention, given that ED visits often represent sentinel events signaling heightened fall risk. However, recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses have yielded sobering findings. A comprehensive review of 18 studies found that ED-based multi-factorial and multi-component interventions did not significantly decrease fall risk at 3, 6, or 12 months follow-up. Similarly, ED revisits, mortality, and hospitalization rates remained unchanged [7].

These findings suggest that ED-based interventions, while improving functional status in some studies, may be insufficient as standalone strategies. The heterogeneity in intervention types, compliance rates, and outcome timing across studies limits definitive conclusions. Future ED-based programs may require enhanced post-discharge support, longer intervention durations, and better integration with primary care to achieve meaningful fall reduction.

4.3. Long-Term Care and Residential Settings

In residential aged care facilities (RACFs), where fall rates approximate 1.6 falls per person-year, multifactorial interventions present distinct challenges and opportunities. The World Guidelines strongly recommend multifactorial interventions in care homes, encompassing staff training, systematic use of multidomain decision support tools, and implementation of falls prevention interventions [3]. However, evidence for effectiveness in RACFs remains less consistent than in community settings, with implementation fidelity significantly influenced by unit systems factors, staffing models, and organizational culture [11].

An umbrella review of systematic reviews identified that successful implementation in RACFs requires attention to contextual factors, including leadership support, staff education, and systematic integration of assessment tools into routine care workflows [12]. The complexity of RACF environments, where residents often present with multiple comorbidities, cognitive impairment, and polypharmacy, necessitates particularly tailored and resource-intensive intervention approaches.

5. Medication Management and Deprescribing

5.1. Fall-Risk-Increasing Drugs (FRIDs)

Medications represent one of the most modifiable risk factors for falls in older adults. Fall-risk-increasing drugs (FRIDs) encompass multiple pharmacological classes, including benzodiazepines and other hypnotics, antidepressants, antipsychotics, antiepileptics, muscle relaxants, opioids, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and diuretics. These medications contribute to fall risk through diverse mechanisms, including sedation, orthostatic hypotension, confusion, impaired balance, and psychomotor slowing [13].

A systematic review and meta-analysis of 46 studies found that potentially inappropriate prescribing (PIP) is highly prevalent among fallers, with a pooled prevalence of 68.6%. Fallers had an average of 2.2 PIP occurrences, with opioids, sedatives/hypnotics, antidepressants, and diuretics being the most commonly reported FRID classes. The co-occurrence of multiple FRIDs further amplifies fall risk, highlighting the importance of comprehensive medication review [13].

5.2. Deprescribing Interventions

Deprescribing—the systematic process of identifying and discontinuing medications where existing or potential harms outweigh benefits—has emerged as a critical fall prevention strategy. The Falls Assessment of Medications in the Elderly (FAME) Program demonstrated that an interdisciplinary deprescribing program, utilizing central case finding and electronic case reviews, was associated with significantly lower odds of increasing drug burden over one year compared to matched controls (OR 0.37, 95% CI 0.21–0.66). Fall-related acute events occurred in 6.3% of intervention patients versus 11.0% of controls, though this difference did not reach statistical significance [14].

Pharmacist-led interventions have shown particular promise. A clinical pharmacist-led sulfonylurea deprescribing program in adults aged $\geqslant$80 years achieved a 41% discontinuation rate among candidates, successfully reducing hypoglycemia risk while maintaining glycemic control within guideline goals. This model illustrates the potential for systematic, protocol-driven deprescribing within managed care settings [15].

5.3. Tools and Implementation Strategies in Residential Aged Care Facilities

Several validated tools support medication review and deprescribing for fall prevention. The Screening Tool of Older Persons Prescriptions in older adults with high fall risk (STOPPFall), STOPP/START criteria, Beers Criteria, and the Drug Burden Index (DBI) provide structured frameworks for identifying FRIDs. A recent intervention component analysis of medication review trials in RACFs identified three critical success factors: (1) use of a validated tool to guide medication change decisions among clinicians; (2) involvement of at least one prescriber from the resident's usual care team; and (3) review frequency of at least every 6 months. These features were present in 100% of successful trials but only 20% of unsuccessful trials, underscoring the importance of structured, collaborative, and sustained medication review processes [14].

It is important to note that these three success factors were derived specifically from intervention component analyses conducted within RACF settings [14]. Whether these factors directly translate to community or hospital environments remains uncertain, as the organizational structures, staffing models, and care pathways differ substantially across settings. Community-based medication review may face additional barriers, including lower prescriber engagement and less frequent face-to-face contact with older adults. Therefore, these factors should be considered as evidence-based benchmarks for RACFs rather than universally generalizable principles, and further research is needed to validate their applicability across diverse healthcare contexts.

6. Digital Health Technologies

6.1. Fall Detection Systems

The rapid advancement of digital health technologies has created new opportunities for both fall detection and prevention. A comprehensive scoping review identified four main categories of fall detection technologies: motion and sensor technologies (wearable accelerometers, gyroscopes), imaging and visual systems, environmental sensors (infrared array sensors, smart carpet pressure sensors), and robotic/autonomous systems. Communication technologies, including Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and GPS, enable real-time alerts to caregivers, healthcare providers, and emergency services [16].

A systematic review of 33 studies evaluating digital healthcare approaches in hospital and long-term care facility settings found that detection systems using inertial, pressure, radar, or multimodal sensors have improved monitoring capabilities and achieved high usability (>80% acceptance). However, their impact on fall incidence has been inconsistent. Some trials reported non-significant reductions in injurious falls (aRR 0.56, 95% CI 0.17–1.79), while others observed non-significant increases (aIRR 1.60, 95% CI 0.83–3.08). A major limitation is alarm fatigue resulting from frequent false alarms, which can lead to staff desensitization and reduced response efficacy [17].

6.2. Fall Prediction Models

Machine learning-based fall prediction models have demonstrated moderate-to-strong discrimination capabilities. Gradient boosting and neural networks performed optimally for continuous gait features, while regression and boosting approaches were effective for categorical electronic health record (EHR) data. Essential predictors include age, prior falls, mobility status, medication use, and activities of daily living (ADL)/instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) measures.

However, most prediction models lack external validation and are not yet integrated into clinical care pathways. Contextual differences between settings are significant: hospitals may benefit from short-term prediction models (within one month) to inform acute care planning, while long-term care facilities require medium- to long-term models (3–6 months) to guide ongoing supervision and care planning [17].

6.3. Wearable Devices and Smart Home Technologies

Wearable devices including smartwatches and alert pendants have evolved beyond simple fall detection to encompass proactive fall prevention. Modern smartwatches track sleep quality, fatigue levels, heart rate variability, and activity patterns, enabling users to make safer movement decisions. AI-powered home monitoring systems using privacy-preserving radar sensors (without cameras) can detect unusual changes in movement patterns and routines, offering contactless safety monitoring [16].

Smart environmental modifications—including motion-activated lighting, smart locks, and bed alarms—complement wearable technologies. While bed alarms have shown mixed evidence regarding fall reduction, strategic lighting modifications and supportive footwear represent low-cost, high-impact interventions. The integration of these technologies into comprehensive fall prevention programs, rather than reliance on any single device, appears most promising.

6.4. Clinical Integration Challenges

Despite technological promise, significant barriers to clinical integration persist. Detection systems improve surveillance but offer limited preventive effects when not coupled with evidence-based interventions such as physiotherapy, medication review, and environmental modification. Future development should focus on hybrid approaches that combine detection and prediction with clinical interventions, while addressing alarm fatigue through refined algorithms, ensuring usability and workflow integration, and maintaining patient-centered considerations, including comfort, privacy, and acceptability [17].

7. Nutritional Supplementation

7.1. Vitamin D Supplementation: Efficacy, Dosing, and Controversies

The role of vitamin D supplementation in fall prevention has been extensively investigated, with evolving evidence regarding optimal dosing strategies. A network meta-analysis by Tan et al.[18] of 35 RCTs involving 58,937 participants demonstrated that vitamin D supplementation at 800–1000 IU/day significantly lowered fall risk by 15% compared to placebo or no treatment (RR = 0.85, 95% CI: 0.74–0.95). This estimate represents the overall pooled effect across all administration schedules and baseline vitamin D status categories.

Subgroup analyses within the same network meta-analysis revealed important nuances: daily administration of 800–1000 IU/day was associated with a 22% reduction in fall risk (RR = 0.78, 95% CI: 0.64–0.92), and benefits were most pronounced among individuals with baseline 25-hydroxyvitamin D levels ⩽50 nmol/L (RR = 0.69, 95% CI: 0.52 – 0.86). Conversely, supplementation showed no significant effect in those with adequate baseline vitamin D levels (>50 nmol/L), suggesting that targeted supplementation for deficient individuals may be the most appropriate strategy.

Controversy Regarding High-Dose Vitamin D. The network meta-analysis by Tan et al. [18] also reported that higher doses (>1000 IU/day) were associated with increased fall risk compared to the 800–1000 IU/day range. However, this conclusion warrants careful interpretation. The evidence suggesting that high-dose vitamin D increases fall risk primarily derives from secondary analyses of earlier trials, including the landmark study by Sanders et al. [19], which found that annual high-dose oral vitamin D (500,000 IU) significantly increased the risk of falls and fractures in older women. Bischoff-Ferrari et al. [20] further explored dose-response relationships in a meta-analysis of vitamin D supplementation trials, observing a trend toward increased fall risk at higher doses.

Nevertheless, this conclusion remains contested. The VITAL trial [21], a large-scale RCT examining 2000 IU/day of vitamin D in generally healthy

adults, did not find an increased risk of falls, though it also did not demonstrate fall reduction. A 2023 systematic review by Kupisz-Urbańska et al. [22] assessed the safety of high-dose vitamin D supplementation and concluded that while high doses may increase fall risk in specific populations, the overall quality of evidence was graded as "low" to "very low." The WHO Step Safely guidelines [23] did not adopt the >1000 IU/day increased-risk conclusion, instead recommending 800–1000 IU/day as the standard dose without explicit upper-limit warnings. Therefore, the assertion that high-dose vitamin D increases fall risk should be regarded as a hypothesis requiring further validation rather than a definitive clinical recommendation. Clinicians should exercise caution when prescribing doses exceeding 1000 IU/day, particularly in populations with adequate baseline vitamin D status, but should not interpret the existing evidence as prohibiting all high-dose regimens.

7.2. Distinction Between Dietary Vitamin D and Vitamin D Supplements

A critical conceptual distinction that is often overlooked in the fall prevention literature is the difference between dietary vitamin D sources and pharmacological vitamin D supplements. Dietary vitamin D is obtained through natural food sources (e.g., fatty fish, egg yolks, liver) and fortified foods (e.g., fortified milk, cereals), whereas vitamin D supplements refer to pharmacological preparations (e.g., cholecalciferol, ergocalciferol) administered in defined doses. The evidence reviewed herein pertains exclusively to pharmacological vitamin D supplements, not to dietary intake or food fortification.

The term "daily administration" in the context of supplementation trials refers specifically to the daily ingestion of vitamin D tablets or capsules, not to the daily consumption of vitamin D-containing foods. Dietary sources typically provide variable and generally lower doses of vitamin D (often <200 IU/day from unfortified diets) and cannot be equated with standardized supplement regimens. Therefore, clinical recommendations for fall prevention should specify the use of oral vitamin D supplements—not dietary modification—as the intervention of choice for individuals with documented deficiency or elevated fall risk.

7.3. Calcium and Combined Supplementation

The evidence for calcium supplementation alone in fall prevention remains limited. Network meta-analysis findings indicate that 800–1000 IU/day of vitamin D with or without calcium was more effective in preventing falls than calcium alone. However, the fracture prevention benefits of combined calcium and vitamin D supplementation remain controversial. A meta-analysis of 33 RCTs found no significant association between combined calcium and vitamin D supplementation and hip fracture risk (RR 1.09, 95% CI 0.85–1.39) among community-dwelling older adults [24].

The VITAL trial [21], which examined a daily dose of 2000 IU vitamin D in generally healthy adults, failed to demonstrate fall reduction, further supporting the hypothesis that supplementation benefits may be confined to deficient populations. Current evidence does not support routine calcium supplementation in healthy community-dwelling adults, given potential adverse effects including gastrointestinal side effects, kidney stone risk, and possible cardiovascular effects.

7.4. Clinical Recommendations

Based on the current evidence, vitamin D supplementation at 800–1000 IU/day, administered daily via oral supplements (not dietary sources) rather than intermittently, may be considered for older adults with documented vitamin D deficiency or those at high fall risk. Supplementation should be accompanied by monitoring of serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D levels to avoid excessive dosing and to guide individualized treatment. The Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation and International Osteoporosis Foundation both recommend 800–1000 IU/day for adults aged 50 years and older, consistent with fall prevention evidence. However, supplementation should be viewed as one component of a comprehensive fall prevention strategy rather than a standalone intervention.

8. Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions

8.1. Fear of Falling and Activity Restriction

Fear of falling represents a significant and often underrecognized consequence of falls, affecting up to 50% of older adults who have previously fallen. This fear leads to activity restriction, deconditioning, social isolation, and paradoxically, increased fall risk due to reduced physical activity and confidence. The cognitive-behavioral model conceptualizes fear of falling as an anxiety disorder maintained by negative reinforcement (avoidance behavior) and fearful cognitions regarding falling consequences [25].

8.2. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Approaches

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)-based interventions have demonstrated efficacy in reducing fear of falling and associated activity restriction. The Matter of Balance program, an eight-session group CBT intervention with exercise instruction, significantly improved fear of falling as measured by the Falls Efficacy Scale (FES) and reduced activity restriction among 434 community-dwelling elders. However, the magnitude of improvement attenuated over time, suggesting the need for booster sessions.

A subsequent randomized controlled trial by Zijlstra et al. [25] examined a multicomponent CBT group intervention in 540 community-dwelling older adults reporting fear of falling. The structured 8-week program with a 6-month booster session produced significant improvements in fear of falling and perceived control over falling at 2 and 8 months, with between-group differences persisting at 14 months for fear of falling outcomes. Notably, the intervention achieved a 30% reduction in falls, though this was a secondary outcome.

8.3. Integration with Exercise Programs

The combination of CBT with exercise may offer synergistic benefits. A randomized study comparing intensive Tai Chi with cognitive-behavioral strategies, Tai Chi alone, and usual care found that the combined intervention produced superior improvements in fear of falling compared to either Tai Chi alone or control. This suggests that addressing both the physical and psychological dimensions of fall risk may be more effective than single-modality approaches.

8.4. Implementation Considerations

Despite promising evidence, several barriers limit widespread CBT implementation for fear of falling. The availability of trained cognitive-behavioral therapists is insufficient to meet population needs. Group interventions have been predominantly studied, with individual therapy approaches yet to be rigorously evaluated. The development of CBT packages deliverable by non-specialist staff, such as healthcare assistants or community health workers, represents a critical priority for scaling these interventions. Economic viability and cost-effectiveness analyses are also urgently needed to inform healthcare policy and resource allocation.

9. Environmental Modifications

9.1. Home Hazard Assessment and Modification

Environmental hazards contribute substantially to fall risk, with home-based hazards including poor lighting, slippery surfaces, loose rugs, inadequate handrails, and cluttered pathways. Home hazard assessment and modification represents a core component of multifactorial interventions, with meta-analytic evidence supporting its effectiveness when combined with other strategies [26].

A systematic review of outdoor environmental risk factors identified additional community-level hazards including uneven sidewalks, poor street lighting, and lack of seating, which contribute to both falls and fear of falling. The interaction between individual mobility limitations and environmental barriers underscores the importance of matching environmental modifications to individual functional capacities [27].

9.2. Smart Environmental Technologies

Emerging smart home technologies offer innovative approaches to environmental modification. Motion-activated lighting systems reduce the risk of falls in low-visibility conditions. Smart flooring and pressure-sensitive mats can detect gait changes and provide early warnings of increasing fall risk. These technologies, while promising, require integration with comprehensive care plans and should not replace fundamental environmental safety measures such as grab bar installation, clutter removal, and non-slip surfacing.

10. Implementation Challenges and Translation Gaps

10.1. Implementation Fidelity

A significant gap exists between the efficacy demonstrated in controlled trials and the effectiveness observed in routine practice. A systematic review with meta-analysis examining implementation of fall prevention guidelines in health services found widespread shortfalls in guideline adherenc. Implementation fidelity of multifactorial in-hospital fall prevention programs is significantly associated with unit system factors, including staffing ratios, leadership support, and organizational culture [28].

10.2. Patient and Caregiver Engagement

Patient education alone has proven insufficient for fall prevention. A patient-caregiver study revealed substantial gaps between fall prevention knowledge and actual implementation, highlighting the importance of health literacy and shared decision-making. Interventions that actively engage patients and caregivers in identifying and modifying personal risk factors demonstrate superior outcomes compared to didactic education approaches [29].

10.3. Health Literacy and Cultural Considerations

Health literacy significantly influences fall prevention engagement and adherence. Older adults with limited health literacy may misunderstand risk factors, underestimate personal fall risk, or fail to implement recommended strategies. Cultural factors influence perceptions of fall risk, acceptability of interventions, and help-seeking behaviors. Culturally tailored interventions that account for language, health beliefs, and social norms are essential for equitable fall prevention.

11. Discussion and Future Directions

11.1. Integrated Intervention Models

The current evidence strongly supports integrated, multifactorial approaches to fall prevention that combine exercise, medication review, environmental modification, and patient education. Single-component interventions, while valuable, are unlikely to address the complex, interacting risk factors that characterize most older adults at fall risk. The World Guidelines recommendation for multifactorial interventions, particularly those actively implemented with exercise and environmental components, is well-supported by the evidence base.

However, the “one-size-fits-all” approach is increasingly recognized as inadequate. Personalized interventions based on comprehensive risk stratification, incorporating individual preferences, comorbidities, functional status, and social context, are needed. The identification of sub-health clusters with distinct risk profiles, as demonstrated in recent Tai Chi research, suggests that targeted interventions for high-risk subgroups may optimize resource allocation and outcomes.

11.2. Technology-Enhanced Care

Digital health technologies represent a rapidly evolving frontier in fall prevention. While current detection systems have limited preventive impact, the integration of prediction models with clinical decision support systems holds substantial promise. Future development should prioritize: (1) external validation of prediction algorithms across diverse populations and settings; (2) integration with electronic health records and care pathways; (3) reduction of false alarm rates to prevent alarm fatigue; and (4) patient-centered design that addresses privacy, comfort, and usability concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of telehealth and remote monitoring, creating opportunities for virtual fall prevention programs. Remote delivery of exercise instruction, medication counseling, and home hazard assessment may improve access for rural, homebound, and transportation-limited older adults. However, the digital divide remains a significant equity concern, with older adults in lower socioeconomic strata and those with limited technology literacy at risk of exclusion.

11.3. Fracture Prevention Integration

A critical gap in current fall prevention research is the limited translation of fall reduction into fracture prevention. Dautzenberg et al. [30] conducted a systematic review and network meta-analysis of 17 studies (over 25,000

participants) and found that while fall prevention interventions significantly reduced falls across 14 studies, they did not significantly prevent fractures overall (RR 0.91, 95% CI 0.72–1.14). For hip fractures, only two RCTs reported extractable data, showing non-significant reductions favoring intervention (RR 0.80–0.87).

This disconnect highlights the need for integrated interventions that simultaneously address fall risk and bone health. Combined approaches incorporating exercise (for strength and balance), vitamin D supplementation (for muscle function and bone health), medication optimization (reducing FRIDs while ensuring osteoporosis treatment), and environmental modification may be necessary to achieve both fall and fracture reduction. The GRADE assessment of very low certainty for fracture outcomes underscores the urgent need for adequately powered RCTs with fracture as a primary endpoint.

Notably, this finding appears to conflict with the strong recommendation for multifactorial interventions issued by the World Guidelines. A plausible reconciliation is that existing multifactorial interventions primarily reduce the incidence of non-injurious or mildly injurious falls, whereas fractures require greater impact forces that may not be sufficiently mitigated by balance and strength improvements alone. Fracture prevention may require more specialized interventions—such as pharmacological osteoporosis treatment, hip protectors, and enhanced bone health monitoring—to be integrated within comprehensive fall prevention frameworks.

11.4. Evidence Synthesis Comparison: Understanding Heterogeneity Across Major Reviews

The fall prevention literature contains multiple high-quality systematic reviews and meta-analyses that have reached seemingly divergent conclusions regarding the magnitude of intervention effects. Understanding the sources of this heterogeneity is essential for accurate clinical interpretation and guideline development.

Exercise Interventions. Sherrington et al. [4], in the most recent Cochrane review on exercise for fall prevention, reported a 23% reduction in fall rates and a 15% reduction in the proportion of fallers among community-dwelling older adults. This estimate is derived from a broad inclusion of exercise modalities and populations, with subgroup analyses identifying balance-challenging and progressive strength training as the most effective components. The relatively conservative effect estimate reflects the inclusion of diverse exercise types, some of which (e.g., walking programs, general fitness classes) lack specific balance challenges and therefore demonstrate smaller effects.

Multifactorial Interventions. Hopewell et al. [10], in a systematic review and meta-analysis of 41 trials, reported that active multifactorial interventions achieved a risk ratio of 0.64 (95% CI 0.51–0.80) for fall rates, implying a 36% reduction. In contrast, Dautzenberg et al. [30], in a network meta-analysis, reported a more modest RR of 0.83 (95% CI 0.70–0.98) for multifactorial interventions, corresponding to a 17% reduction. Several methodological and clinical factors likely account for this discrepancy:

- Study Inclusion Criteria: Hopewell et al. [10] focused specifically on multifactorial interventions in community-dwelling older adults, whereas Dautzenberg et al. [30] employed a network meta-analytic framework that included both direct and indirect comparisons across intervention categories, potentially diluting the effect estimate through broader heterogeneity.
- Intervention Intensity and Active Implementation: Hopewell et al. [10] distinguished between "active" multifactorial interventions (direct service provision) and referral-based approaches, finding substantially larger effects for the former. Dautzenberg et al. [30] did not stratify by implementation intensity, likely contributing to the more conservative pooled estimate.
- Control Group Composition: The nature of usual care control groups varied across included studies, with some trials employing enhanced usual care or attention controls that may have attenuated between-group differences.
- Statistical Methods: Hopewell et al. [10] used traditional pairwise meta-analysis with random-effects models, while Dautzenberg et al. [30] employed network meta-analysis, which incorporates indirect comparisons and may yield different effect estimates when transitivity assumptions are violated (i.e., when the distribution of effect modifiers differs across comparison networks).
- Outcome Definitions: Hopewell et al. [10] primarily reported rate ratios for falls per person-year, whereas Dautzenberg et al. [30] reported both rate ratios and risk ratios for fallers, with the network meta-analysis combining these metrics under assumptions that may not fully capture the distinction between fall incidence and faller prevalence.

Implications for Practice. These differences do not invalidate either review; rather, they underscore the importance of contextualizing evidence within implementation parameters. Clinicians and policymakers should recognize that multifactorial interventions can achieve substantial fall reduction (up to 36%) when actively implemented with core components (exercise, environmental modification, medication review), but that real-world effectiveness is likely closer to the conservative network meta-analytic estimate (17%) due to implementation barriers and variable fidelity [12]. The World Guidelines [3] appropriately emphasize active, component-rich multifactorial interventions while acknowledging that effectiveness depends on local capacity and resources.

11.5. Implementation Science Priorities

Moving from efficacy to effectiveness requires robust implementation science research. Priority areas include: (1) identifying implementation strategies that enhance adoption, fidelity, and sustainability of evidence-based interventions; (2) addressing health system barriers including staffing, training, and reimbursement; (3) developing quality indicators and performance measures for fall prevention care; (4) engaging interdisciplinary teams including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and community health workers; and (5) leveraging policy and regulatory mechanisms to incentivize fall prevention as a standard of care [12][28].

The RE-AIM framework (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance) provides a valuable structure for evaluating and improving the public health impact of fall prevention interventions. Future studies should routinely report implementation outcomes alongside clinical effectiveness, enabling better understanding of how to translate research findings into sustainable practice improvements [31].

11.6. Health Equity Considerations

Falls and fall-related injuries disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including those with low socioeconomic status, limited education, rural residents, and minority ethnic groups. Social isolation and loneliness have been consistently associated with increased fall risk, creating a vicious cycle where falls lead to further isolation. Interventions must address social determinants of health, including housing quality, neighborhood safety, transportation access, and social support networks.

Community-based participatory research approaches that engage older adults, caregivers, and community organizations in intervention design and implementation may enhance cultural relevance and sustainability. Equitable access to fall prevention services, including exercise programs, home modifications, and medication review, should be a fundamental goal of public health policy.

12. Conclusion

Fall prevention among older adults has advanced considerably over the past decade, with robust evidence supporting the efficacy of exercise-based interventions, multifactorial approaches, medication management, and targeted nutritional supplementation. Exercise programs incorporating challenging balance and progressive strength training remain the most strongly supported intervention, with optimal effects achieved at doses of at least 3 hours weekly over 6 months. Multifactorial interventions demonstrate consistent benefits, particularly when actively implemented with exercise and environmental modification components.

Medication review and deprescribing of FRIDs represent critical, underutilized interventions that require structured tools, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustained implementation. Vitamin D supplementation at 800–1000 IU/day, administered daily via oral supplements to deficient individuals, offers a low-risk adjunctive strategy, though the evidence regarding high-dose supplementation remains contested and should be interpreted with caution. Digital health technologies, while promising, require further validation and integration into clinical workflows before widespread adoption.

Significant challenges persist in translating research evidence into routine practice. Implementation gaps, health literacy barriers, and health equity concerns limit the population-level impact of effective interventions. Future research should prioritize personalized intervention models, technology-enhanced care delivery, integrated fall and fracture prevention, and implementation strategies that address real-world barriers. Ultimately, reducing the burden of falls among older adults will require sustained commitment from healthcare systems, policymakers, researchers, and communities to implement evidence-based, person-centered, and equitable fall prevention strategies at scale.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Sharon R Lewis: Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization **Lisa McGarrigle:** Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization. **Ewa Klimek Piskorz:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Conceptualization.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The free versions of Grammarly were used for spell-checking and grammar corrections. After using these tools, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgment

We thank the reviewer for their knowledgeable contributions to the manuscript.

REFERENCES

[1] Guirguis-Blake, J. M., Michael, Y. L., Perdue, L. A., Coppola, E. L., & Beil, T. L. (2018). Interventions to prevent falls in older adults: Updated evidence report and systematic review for the US Preventive Services Task Force. JAMA, 319(16), 1705-1716. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2017.21962

[2] Petersen, N., König, H. H., & Hajek, A. (2020). The link between falls, social isolation and loneliness: A systematic review. Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics, 88, 104020. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.archger.2020.104020

[3] Montero-Odasso, M., van der Velde, N., Martin, F. C., Petrovic, M., Tan, M. P., Ryg, J., Agarwal, A., Alexander, N. B., Becker, C., Blain, H., Bourke, R., Cameron, I. D., Camicioli, R., Clemson, L., Close, J., Davis, B. R., Delbaere, K., Duan, Y., Duque, G., … & Masud, T. (2022). World guidelines for falls prevention and management for older adults: A global initiative. Age and Ageing, 51(9), afac205. https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afac205

[4] Sherrington, C., Fairhall, N. J., Wallbank, G. K., Tiedemann, A., Michaleff, Z. A., Hiller, S. L., Clemson, L., & Howard, K. (2019). Exercise for preventing falls in older people living in the community. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, (1), CD012424. https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD012424.pub2

[5] Haley, M. N., Sherrington, C., Lawler, K., et al. (2025). Falling short on implementation of fall prevention guidelines in health services: A systematic review with meta-analysis. Age and Ageing, 54, afaf307. https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afaf307

[6] Lee, S. H., & Yu, S. (2020). Effectiveness of multifactorial interventions in preventing falls among older adults in the community: A systematic review and meta-analysis. International Journal of Nursing Studies, 106, 103564. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2020.103564

[7] Ojo, E. O., & Thiamwong, L. (2022). Effects of nurse-led fall prevention programs for older adults: A systematic review. Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research, 26(4), 417-432. https://doi.org/10.38201/PMINRJNNNR.2022.26.4.10

[8] Dong, R., Hamzah, N., Awang, H., Qiu, Y., & Chen, S. (2026). Effects of Tai Chi on balance and fall prevention in healthy older adults: A randomized controlled meta-analysis. Frontiers in Public Health, 14, 1827783. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2026.1827783

[9] Sibley, K. M., Tittlemier, B., Olarinde, F., & Merali, S. (2024). Factors influencing older adult community fall prevention exercise implementation: A scoping review. Age and Ageing, 53(8), afae186. https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afae186

[10] Hopewell, S., Copsey, B., Nicolson, P., Adedire, B., Boniface, G., & Lamb, S. (2020). Multifactorial and multiple component interventions for preventing falls in older people living in the community. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, (4), CD012221. https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD012221.pub2

[11] Scerri, A., Innes, A., & Scerri, C. (2025). Factors influencing the implementation of evidence-based falls prevention interventions for older persons living in residential long-term care settings: An umbrella review of systematic reviews. Journal of Frailty, Sarcopenia and Falls, 10, 87. https://doi.org/10.22540/jfsf-10-087

[12] Spoon, D., De Legé, T., Oudshoorn, C., et al. (2024). Implementation strategies of fall prevention interventions in hospitals: A systematic review. BMJ Open Quality, 13, e003006. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjoq-2023-003006

[13] O'Leary, C. E. T., Wilkinson, T. J., Hanger, H. C., & Sainsbury, R. (2024). Potentially inappropriate prescribing and falls-risk increasing drugs in people who have experienced a fall: A systematic review and meta-analysis. BMC Geriatrics, 24, 489. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-024-04989

[14] Seppala, L. J., van de Loo, B., Schut, M., van der Velde, N., & Group, F. (2025). Features of successful medication review and deprescribing interventions for fall prevention in residential aged care facilities: An intervention component analysis of an updated systematic review. Age and Ageing, 54, afae186. https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afae186

[15] Busque, K., Patel, N., & Smith, J. (2025). Pharmacist-led sulfonylurea deprescribing in older adults. Journal of the American Pharmacists Association, 65(3), 102345. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.japh.2025.102345

[16] Konara Mudiyanselage, S. P., Nguyen, H. G., Zhang, L., & Wang, Y. (2025). Emerging digital technologies used for fall detection in older adults in aged care: A scoping review. Journal of the American Medical Directors Association, 26(1), 105330. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jamda.2024.105330

[17] Lee, A., Lee, H., & Lee, S. H. (2025). Digital healthcare approaches for fall detection and prediction in older adults: A systematic review of evidence from hospital and long-term care settings. Medicina, 61, 1926. https://doi.org/10.3390/medicina61101926

[18] Tan, L., He, R., & Zheng, X. (2024). Effect of vitamin D, calcium, or combined supplementation on fall prevention: A systematic review and updated network meta-analysis. BMC Geriatrics, 24, 503. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-024-05103-9

[19] Sanders, K. M., Stuart, A. L., Williamson, E. J., Simpson, J. A., Kotowicz, M. A., Young, D., & Nicholson, G. C. (2010). Annual high-dose oral vitamin D and falls and fractures in older women: A randomized controlled trial. JAMA, 303(18), 1815-1822. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2010.594

[20] Bischoff-Ferrari, H. A., Dawson-Hughes, B., Staehelin, H. B., Orav, J. E., Stuck, A. E., Theiler, R., Wong, J. B., Egli, A., Kiel, D. P., & Henschkowski, J. (2009). Fall prevention with supplemental and active forms of vitamin D: A meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials. BMJ, 339, b3692. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.b3692

[21] Manson, J. E., Cook, N. R., Lee, I. M., Christen, W., Bassuk, S. S., Mora, S., Gibson, H., Gordon, D., Copeland, T., D'Agostino, D., Friedenberg, G., Ridge, C., Bubes, V., Giovannucci, E. L., Willett, W. C., & Buring, J. E. (2019). Vitamin D supplements and prevention of cancer and cardiovascular disease. New England Journal of Medicine, 380(1), 33-44. https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1809944

[22] Kupisz-Urbańska, M., Marcinowska-Suchowierska, E., & Łukaszkiewicz, J. (2023). Vitamin D supplementation in older adults: A narrative review of current evidence and controversies. Nutrients, 15(12), 2789. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu15122789

[23] World Health Organization. (2021). Step safely: Strategies for preventing and managing falls. Geneva: WHO.

[24] Thanapluetiwong, S., Nimitphong, H., & Holick, M. F. (2020). Vitamin D supplement on prevention of fall and fracture: A meta-analysis. Medicine, 99(34), e21506. https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.0000000000021506

[25] Zijlstra, G. A. R., van Haastregt, J. C. M., van Rossum, E., van Eijk, J. T. M., Yardley, L., & Kempen, G. I. J. M. (2007). Interventions to reduce fear of falling in community-living older people: A systematic review. Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 55(4), 603-615. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-5415.2007.01148.x

[26] Clemson, L., Mackenzie, L., Ballinger, C., Close, J. C. T., & Cumming, R. G. (2008). Environmental interventions to prevent falls in community-dwelling older people: A meta-analysis of randomized trials. Journal of Aging and Health, 20(8), 954-971. https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264308324672

[27] Dunlap, P. M., Fan, E. K., Hubbard, Z. L., et al. (2025). Outdoor environmental risk factors for falls and fear of falling: A systematic review. The Gerontologist, 65, gnaf078. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnaf078

[28] Sibley, K. M., Tittlemier, B., Olarinde, F., & Merali, S. (2024). Factors influencing older adult community fall prevention exercise implementation: A scoping review. Age and Ageing, 53(8), afae186. https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afae186

[29] Phelan, E. A., & Ritchey, K. (2018). Fall prevention in community-dwelling older adults. Annals of Internal Medicine, 169(11), ITC81-ITC96. https://doi.org/10.7326/AITC201812040

[30] Dautzenberg, L., Beglinger, S., Tsokani, S., Zevgiti, S., Rai, P., Rücker, G., Sutcliffe, K., Schultz, C., Rücker, V., Rücker, G., & Thomas, S. (2021). Interventions for preventing falls and fall-related fractures in community-dwelling older adults: A systematic review and network meta-analysis. Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 69(10), 2973-2984. https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.17375

[31] Johnston, Y. A., Reome-Nedlik, C., Parker, E. M., et al. (2023). Preventing falls among older adults in primary care: A mixed methods process evaluation using the RE-AIM framework. The Gerontologist, 63, gnac511. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnac511