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Lifeline

Retrospective study

Chronic conditions and the high risk of falling

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Introduction and methodology

By 2030, twenty percent of people in the U.S. will be over the age of 65. While seniors want to preserve their independence and remain active, at least one in three falls in the U.S. every year. From 2000 through 2013, the fall injury death rate for seniors aged 65 and older nearly doubled. In addition to threatening seniors' quality of life, falls also represent a sizable financial burden.

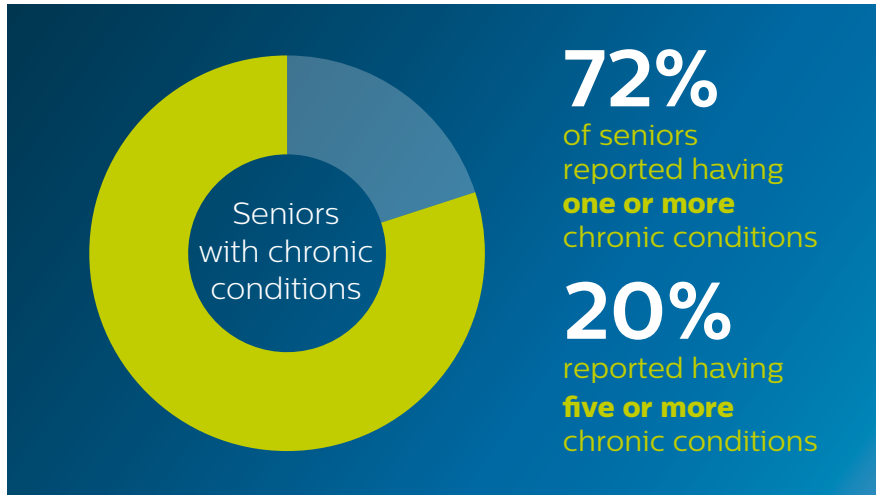
In recognition of Fall Prevention Awareness Month and the need to better understand this growing problem, Philips Lifeline conducted a retrospective study of self-reported fall rates of more than 145,000 seniors using its Philips Lifeline Medical Alert solutions.

The study reveals surprising new data linking those seniors living with chronic conditions to a greater risk of falling. Even patients with chronic diseases unrelated to mobility problems, such as mental health and respiratory conditions, recorded high instances of falling.

The Philips Lifeline study is one of the first to identify a much larger population of seniors at serious risk of falling. The analyzed risks were based on more than 70,000 falls the study population experienced between January 2012 and June 2014. The findings are supplemented by the personal experiences of seniors derived from a qualitative product study conducted in 2014.

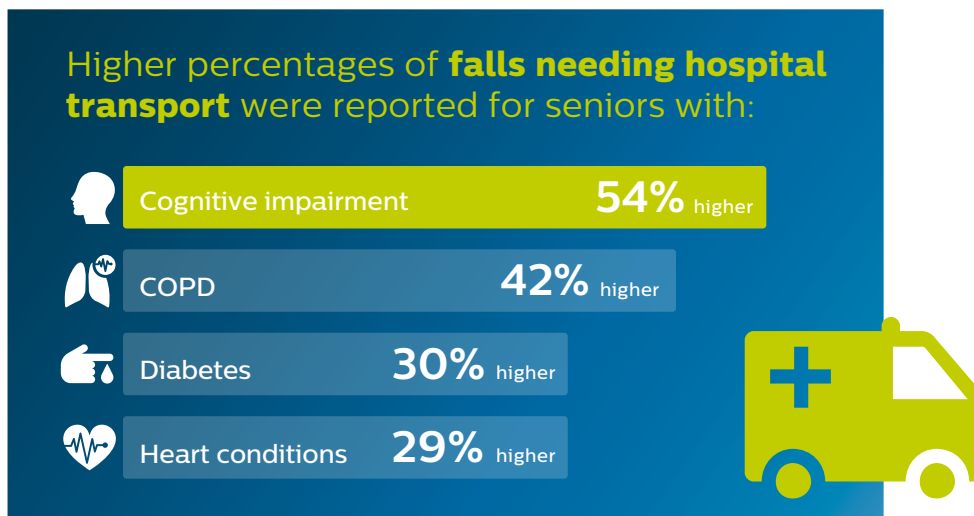
Living with chronic conditions

The study data shows that seniors with chronic illnesses such as Alzheimer's and COPD fall more often, introducing severe enough complications to require emergency transport to a hospital. More frequent falls were reported by those having more chronic conditions. Seniors living with five or more chronic conditions had 40 percent more falls than those who don't have any chronic illnesses. Seniors living with three chronic conditions had 15 percent more falls that required transport to the hospital.

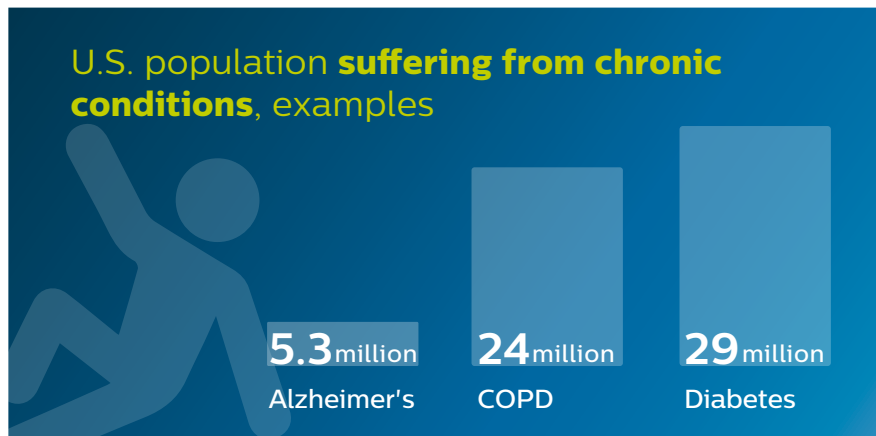


Chronic conditions, falls, and hospital transport

The number of seniors living with chronic diseases is on the rise, increasing the risk of falls.

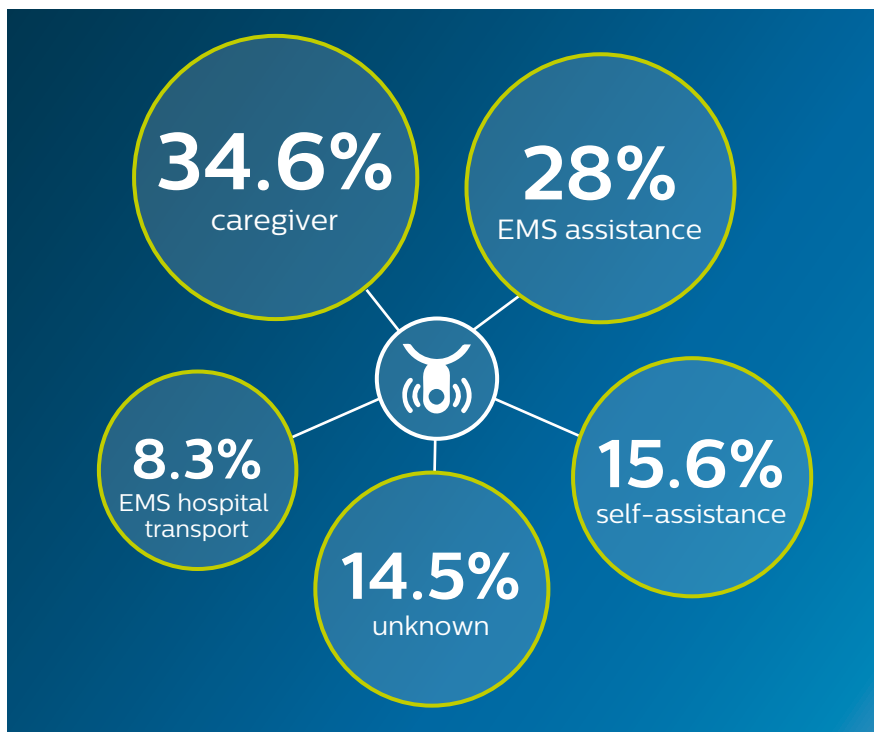


Growth of chronic disease



Because many seniors may choose to not tell their clinicians and caregivers when they have fallen, keeping an accurate record of all falls may be difficult. It requires encouraging patients to share more details about their health conditions, including problems with balance, falls, or near accidents. Emergency response solutions can also help keep an accurate record of falls and ultimately help patients get the care they need. More reporting on falls can lead to better outcomes, including faster transport to the hospital, shorter hospital stays, and timely emergency response.

Type of help needed after a fall for users having **automatic fall detection technology**



Improving response times when seniors fall

When a senior falls and is unable or reluctant to seek assistance, certain **personal emergency response systems (PERS) can automatically detect falls. Emergency response centers can respond as quickly as 21 seconds.** Without an auto detection solution, patients can go hours, even days, without receiving emergency medical attention. Studies show that it can take a patient anywhere between 2 and 72 hours to receive help. Solutions that automatically alert an emergency response center can quickly provide help to seniors, giving their caregivers and families, peace of mind and can potentially help prevent the escalation of serious medical problems.

Response time can depend on the support network the patient has in place as well as who places the call to the emergency medical service.



Conclusion

Patients, caregivers, family members, and clinicians can collaborate to help prevent accidents and be better prepared to anticipate falls and other medical problems. Coordinating care not only improves the quality of life for seniors, but also reduces the chances of loss of independence. Here are ways for seniors and their caregivers to be better prepared.

- **Get timely access to care.** Proactively coordinate care, anticipate urgent care needs, and ask how best to ensure that clinicians are accessible when they are needed most. Use emergency response solutions having automatic fall detection features, such as Philips Lifeline's AutoAlert technology, to reach emergency medical services as quickly as possible.
- **Avoid unnecessary hospital care.** Automatic fall detection technology and responsive medical care may prevent hospital transport, ER visits, and hospitalization. Otherwise, patients could potentially suffer serious medical complications from lying on the floor, unable to move for a prolonged period of time.
- **Prevent future falls.** With a fuller picture of what is happening to seniors in their homes, caregivers as well as occupational therapists can take proactive steps to provide a safer home by adding guardrails or swapping a conventional bed for a hospital bed.
- **Keep clinicians up to date.** Keeping a record of all falls, even minor ones, gives physicians added information that can help them assess seniors' health status. They can then make adjustments to care, such as prescribing exercises to improve balance and coordination.



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All data within the study is reported with a +/- 95% confidence interval