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Country: **Germany**

Titel of the project: **Cross section study on the relationship between elderly falls
and atrial fibrillation**

Project details

Erhard Hackler

Deutsche Seniorenliga e.V.

Award amount: €100,000

Falling among elderly people is often caused by atrial fibrillation, a condition frequently not recognized because more attention is paid to treating any injuries by means of trauma surgery. The goal of this project is to examine patients 70 years of age and older, who have experienced a fall, for atrial fibrillation as well.

Atrial fibrillation can lead to typical symptoms such as palpitations as well as TIA and stroke disorders. On the basis of our own observations of cause and effect, it is suspected that falling among elderly individuals is caused in part by cardiac arrhythmia, and specifically by atrial fibrillation, which results either in a brief hemodynamic impairment or in embolism occurrence in the form of TIA symptoms, subsequently causing the patient to fall. Subsequent treatment thus focuses entirely on caring for the patient using comprehensive trauma surgery techniques, which are in part very stressful for patients. Yet, in some cases, such treatment is obviously a barrier to clarifying the events causing the fall. The approach applied in the project outlined here is, on the one hand, to evaluate within the framework of a cross section study the prevalence of previously unrecognized cases of atrial fibrillation among patients aged 70 and older and at the same time the occurrence of falls requiring trauma surgery treatment. In this connection, it is planned to conduct jointly with 2-3 hospital departments for trauma surgery a study in which corresponding patients would be examined within a screening pool (e.g. using long term ECG or an easy to use event recorder) during their stay at the hospital. In cases where previously unrecognized atrial fibrillation became apparent, standard diagnostic procedures according to guidelines would ensue, with any necessary steps in treatment being considered (e.g. neurological testing for any brain infarct and oral administration of anticoagulation medication if required). The project would thus lead to a heightened awareness of the occurrence of atrial fibrillation among patients prone to falling without any clear reason. With enough data gathered, this could additionally be accompanied by a high publicity campaign and be integrated as part of a general plan for evaluating and preventing falls among elderly patients. This might further include other specialized areas, such as architecture or topics of ENT medicine related to the vestibular system and sense of balance. The findings of the project would be publicized by the German Citizens League as part of its press and publicity work throughout Germany as well as through a possible specific campaign about cardiac arrhythmia to be agreed with Boehringer. The German Citizens League reaches a media audience of about 500 million each year through its publicity work.

Audience

Type

- AF Patients
- Healthcare professionals
- Carers of AF Patients
- General public

Location

Germany, Europe