

Scientific Research – Falls, Fractures and Trauma

33 CHALLENGES AND FACILITATORS TO COLLECTING RESEARCH DATA IN CARE HOMES

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Introduction: The Falls in Care Home (FinCH) study is a large (87 care homes, 1605 resident across 10 UK sites) randomised controlled trial. Its methods were based on a successful feasibility study. Data were collected on 5 measurements, including the number of falls, medicines, equipment and accessed Primary Care & community services. This study explored the challenges and facilitators to collecting these large amounts of data in an environment new to research.

Methods: Arrangements to visit care homes were made to be within two weeks of data collection time point deadlines. At the visit, data were accessed through talking to resident participants, care home staff and reading the care records. Data were transferred to participant's research case report forms by the researcher. A member of staff, or a relative for

the resident, completed questionnaires as a proxy for all residents. Information about the challenges to collecting data were recorded by the researcher as field notes, in 27 homes and analysed using thematic analysis methods. Quotes will be presented.

Results: There was evidence from most of the homes of little or no 'buy-in' from working-level staff. The staff felt overworked and said that the expectations of the study were an added burden to them. They had conflicting priorities for their time such as the newly implemented 'red bag' scheme (<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG27>). A number of communication issues were raised: suspicion from staff regarding the study intentions and not being told that the study was non-judgemental or why the study was being conducted in their home. Care home staff reported that they had not been given training in research methods which they would have appreciated. They didn't understand the meaning of randomisation or blinding and had inadvertently un-blinded researchers. They considered that the Clinical Trials Unit had set unrealistic expectations regarding time to collect data.

Conclusions: The FinCH study has highlighted many challenges which could be mitigated in future care homes studies. Some will be unavoidable, for example, last-minute cancellation of visits due to staff or resident illness. However, implementing a good communication plan and providing research training to care homes staff appear to be key to conducting a successful study, and fostering a professional and successful relationship between care home staff and researchers.