

# Unintentional Falls Among Older Adults - Louisiana, 2007

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## Introduction

Unintentional falls are a common occurrence among older adults, affecting approximately 30% of people 65 years and older each year. The injuries received from a fall can result in death, hospital admission, disability, psychological consequences (e.g. fear of falling), and direct medical costs.

This study examines the epidemiology of unintentional falls that resulted in hospital admission or death among older adults, aged 65 and older, in Louisiana, 2007.

## Methods:

Unintentional fall related hospitalization and death cases were abstracted from the 2007 Louisiana's Inpatient Hospital Discharged data (LAHIDD), and 2007 death certificate data, respectively. Frequencies, percentages and rates were calculated for demographic characteristics as well as for place of injury, discharged status, length of stay and direct cost. All data analysis was conducted using SAS version 9.1.

## Results/Discussion:

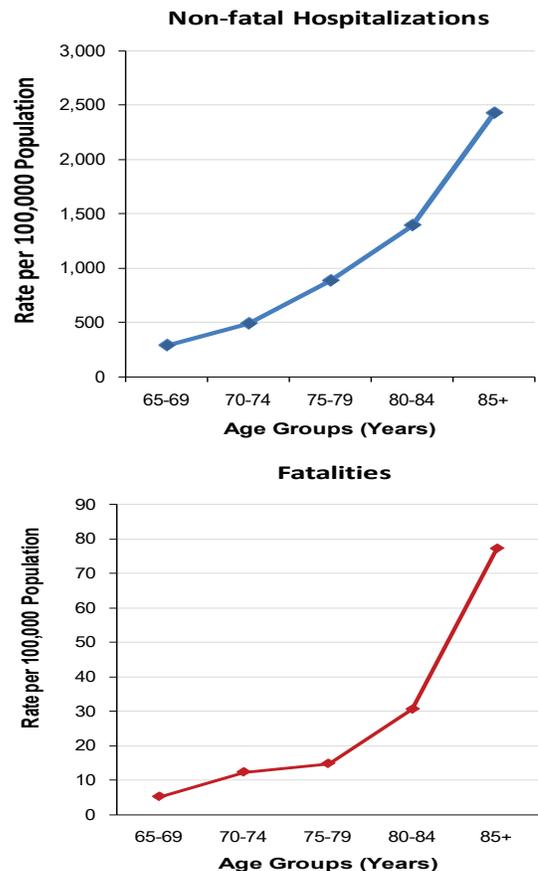
In 2007, unintentional falls were the leading cause of unintentional injury hospitalizations (n=4,661), and deaths (n=114) among older adults, surpassing motor vehicle traffic crashes, poisonings and suffocations (Table 1).

Table 1: Unintentional Injury-related Hospitalizations and Deaths Among Older Adults - Louisiana, 2007

Rank	Non-Fatal Injury Hospitalizations	Fatal Injuries
1	Falls 4,661	Falls 114
2	MV Traffic 289	Not Specified 106
3	Not Specified 204	MV Traffic 95
4	Poisonings 177	Suffocation 45
5	Struck by/against 83	Fire/Flame 31

Both hospitalization and death rates increased dramatically with age, with hospitalization rates ranging from 290.5 to 2,425.2 per 100,000 population and death rates ranging from 5.1 to 77.2 per 100,000 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Unintentional Fall-related Hospitalization and Death Rates, by Age Groups - Louisiana, 2007



Additionally, hospitalization rates were higher in White females (1,221.1 per 100,000 population), and highest in Office of Public Health (OPH) Regions 9\* and 2 (1,314.9 and 1,231.9 per 100,000 population). Deaths rates were slightly higher in White males (27.5 per 100,000 population), and highest in OPH Regions 8 and 9 (40.3 and 40.2 per 100,000 population) (Figure 2 and Tables 2 and 3).

\* Map of Regions on Page 7

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Figure 2: Unintentional Fall-related Hospitalization and Death Rates Among Older Adults, by Gender & Race – Louisiana, 2007

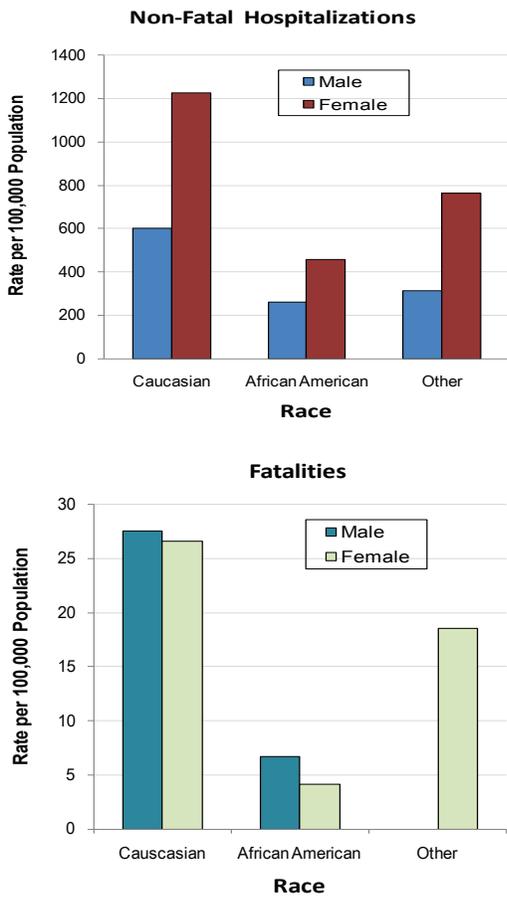


Table 2: Unintentional Fall-related Hospitalization Rates by OPH Region of Residence, Older Adults - Louisiana, 2007

Region	Number	Percent (%)	Rate
1	820	17.6	889.3
2	819	17.6	1,231.9
3	306	6.6	694.1
4	526	11.3	777.6
5	214	4.6	598.3
6	395	8.5	1,010.0
7	323	6.9	444.8
8	421	9.0	892.8
9	753	16.2	1,314.9
Missing	84	1.8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4661</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 3: Unintentional Fall-related Death Rates by OPH Region of Residence, Older Adults - Louisiana, 2007

Region	Number	Percent (%)	Rate
1	9	7.9	9.8
2	11	9.7	16.5
3	7	6.1	15.9
4	9	7.9	13.3
5	--	3.5	11.2
6	7	6.1	17.9
7	25	21.9	34.4
8	19	16.7	40.3
9	23	20.1	40.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The data also showed that most fatal falls occurred in a home or a residential institution (n=77, 67.6%), and that most patients admitted to a hospital due to a fall, were discharged to another institution for further care (n=4,027, 86.9%). Additionally, for those hospitalized, the median length of stay was 5 days, while the median cost was \$25,081, totaling approximately \$140 million dollars in 2007.

**Conclusion:**

Falls are a serious problem facing older adults in Louisiana and the OPH – Injury Research and Prevention Program (IRP), along with the Louisiana Falls Coalition, is working towards implementing prevention programs, such as *Matter of Balance* and *Stepping On* that will reduce the risk and fear of falling among older adults. In addition, in future reports, other sources of data (e.g. emergency department and community level data) may be accessed, in order to see the true scope of the problem.

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## Announcements

**Updates: Infectious Disease Epidemiology (IDES) Webpages**  
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**FOODBORNE/WATERBORNE:** Alfafa Sprouts Recall; Recreational Water Brochure - English and Spanish Versions

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