The hidden cost of safety: How zero-falls policies can hold patients back (and how data can help)

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Check out our commentary in *Disability and Rehab*

Check out our Toolkit at TherapeuticFalls.ca

Disclosure

I have no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest to disclose

Outline

- The safety paradox: Hidden drivers and hidden costs
- Therapeutic Falls - Can data help?

The safety paradox

Safety is not everyone's top priority

- Zero risk ≠ zero harm
- **Healthcare values are not universal**
  - Many patients prioritize autonomy, dignity and mobility more highly
- ‘Safety first' becomes 'safety only

"*What if the house catches on fire?*" Frederick Frost, 2001

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Hidden drivers

Hidden costs

- We often overestimate legal risk
- Shifts clinicians to custodians of risk, but also fuels shame and blame
- ”Safe” in the hospital can mean less safe in the community

Do we have a duty to practice higher-risk activities while patients are in our care?

Can data help?

Therapeutic Falls evaluation
December 2021 – October 2024

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Process Measures

95%+ participation in Therapeutic Falls team learning workshops (n=~500 staff)

~250 patients have been placed on the therapeutic falls pathway (to date)

An average of 0.47 – 2.6 (1.58-15.29%) patients placed on pathway/month depending on the unit

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So are patients falling more?

- Risk difference for the number of falls with harm/year was not significant for any of the rehab units
- No special cause variation for the three units who have implemented therapeutic falls the longest

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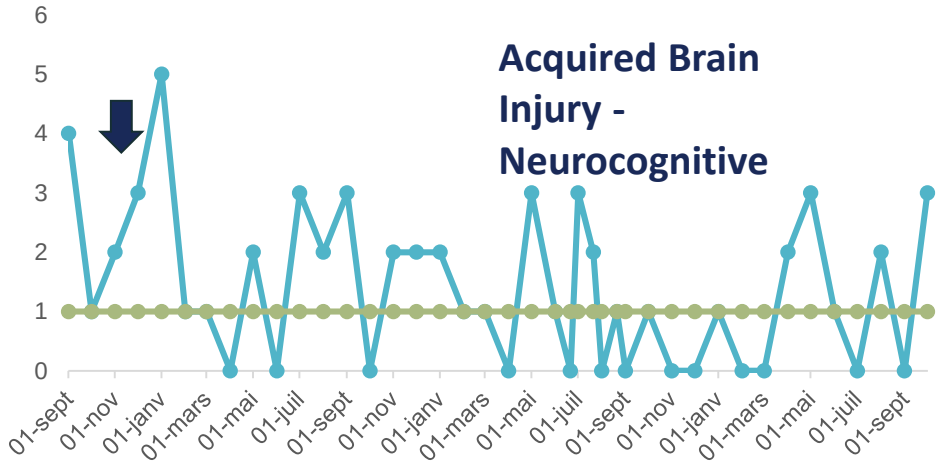

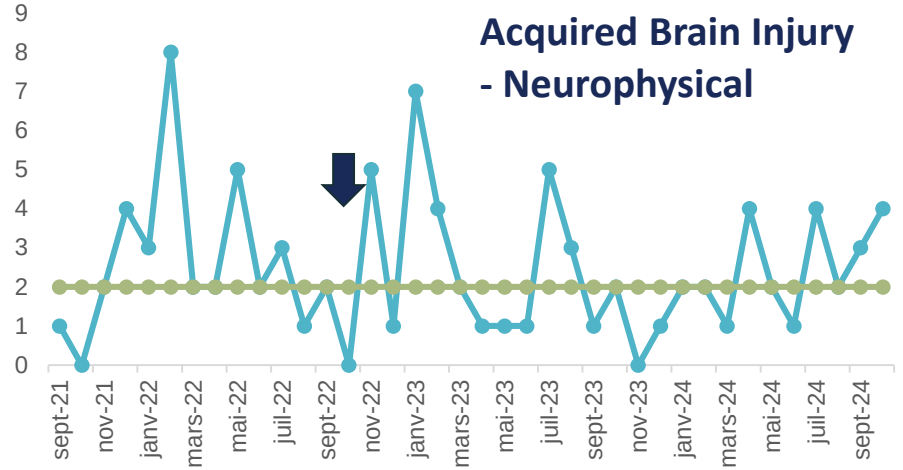

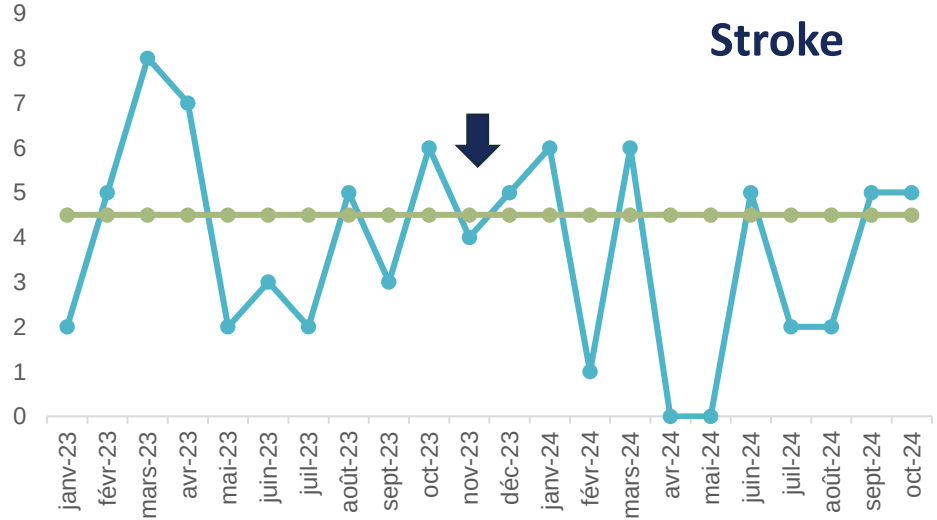

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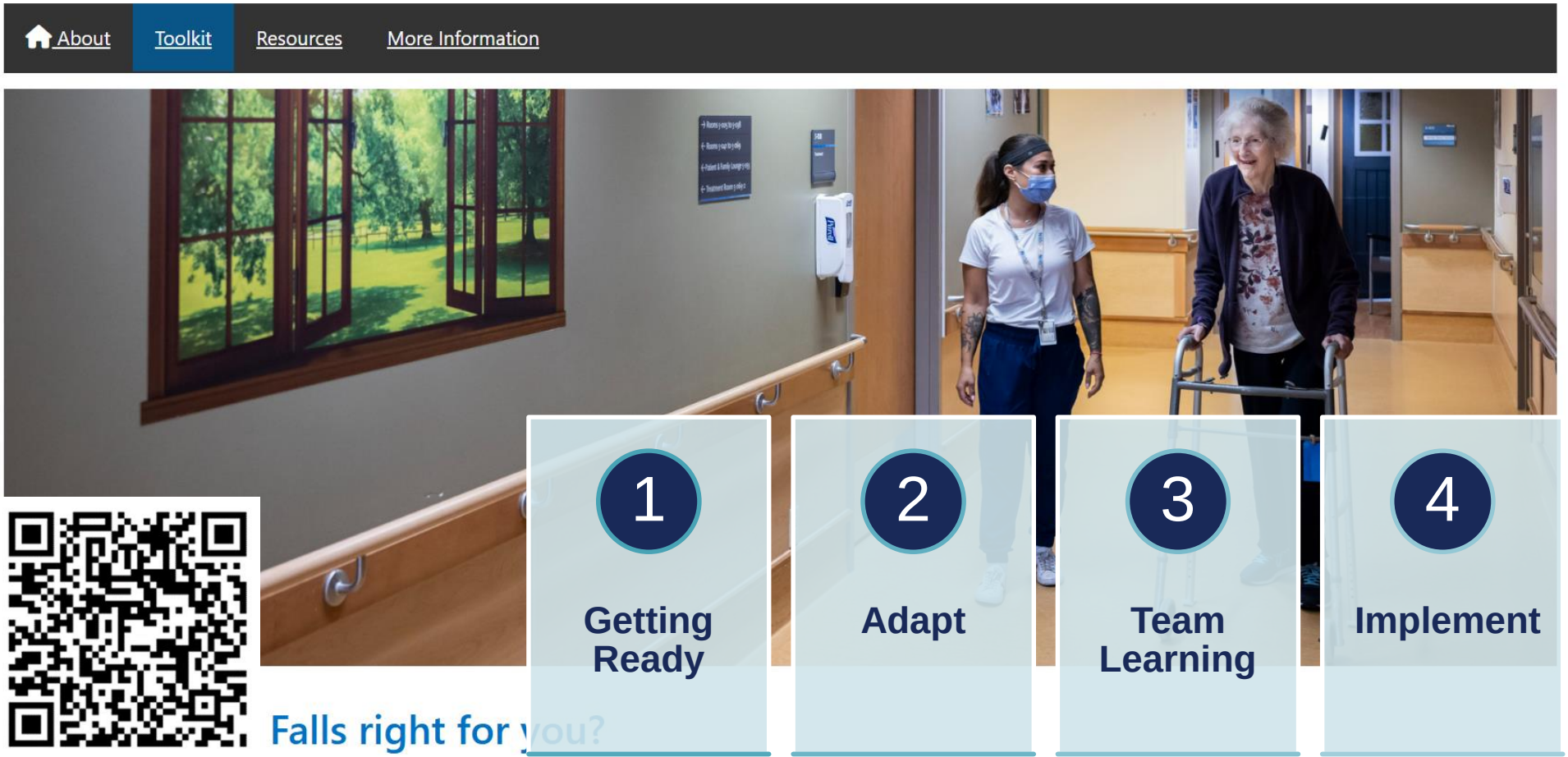
Implementation Toolkit

Is Therapeutic Falls right for you?

Implementation Toolkit




"Therapeutic Falls has helped to normalize falls. Do I still feel shame? Yes, but less. Falls are going to happen, and for some, that is ok. You need to lean into it. Put a different strategy in place."
- Occupational Therapist, Toronto Rehab
"Patients should not be asked to make decisions about risk, alone."
- Physiotherapist, Toronto Rehab
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Therapeutic Falls Advisory Group

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