

"A Pain in the Neck!" The Challenges of C-spine Fractures in the Elderly.

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Cervical spine fractures in the elderly carry a risk of mortality as high as 26% ¹ and accompanying neurologic deficits suggest an increased risk of death ². Older adults represent a unique component of the cervically injured population due to changes in bone structure, physiologic reserve, and accumulated chronic illnesses. Management of such injuries with prolonged bed rest is recognised as poorly tolerated by the elderly. Common techniques employed for c-spine stabilisation include operative fixation, halo traction, and rigid collars ³.

To be able to reduce the significant risk of death after such an injury it is important to understand the possible and actual complications a patient might face. A single case study design will be used to explore the nursing process and interventions undertaken to aid a 91 year old female's recovery from a cervical-spine injury with associated neurological deficits sustained from a fall in the home.

Clinical, radiological and pathological findings will be described along with discussion and analysis of the potential and actual problems experienced. With a rapidly aging population this single case study aims to raise the level of nursing awareness of the potential and actual problems faced by an elderly patient post cervical spine injury and the health care management utilised to aid this patient's return to life in the community.

First Time Presenter Prize

Based on presentation skills and awarded to the person presenting for the first time at an 'ANNA Conference' showing a good understanding of their chosen topic and relevance to Neuroscience Nursing