

# Factors associated with poor referral rates to physical therapy among patients who are at a high risk of falling: a retrospective study

Donny Schwartz BPT, MSc.

Physiotherapy Department Kupat Cholim Clalit: Jerusalem Region



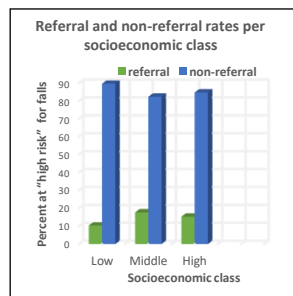
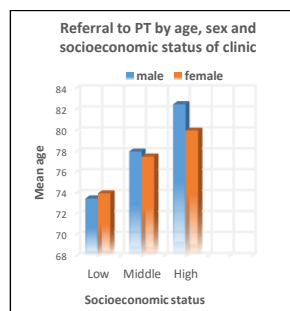
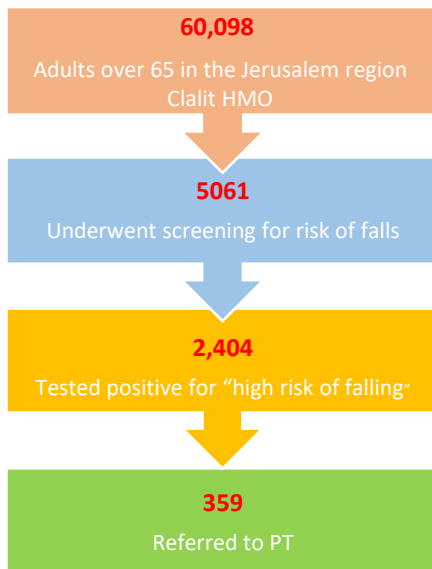
## Background

- A third of the population of home-dwelling adults over 65 years old and half of people 85 years or older fall each year.
- Physiotherapy (PT) can mitigate impairments that arise from most of the risk factors of fallers
- The Clalit health maintenance organization (HMO) in Israel participates in the Ministry of Health's fall prevention program and uses several standard screening tools to identify patients who are at risk for falling.
- The population over 65 years in the Jerusalem region of the Clalit HMO numbered 60,098 in 2020, while the number of cases referred to physiotherapy for fall prevention programs in this region is much lower than the expected rate of 33-50%

## Objectives:

### Primary objective:

- To find factors (demographic, medical history, socioeconomic and HMO related) that are associated with lower referral rates to PT among adults that are at a high risk of falling.



## Methods

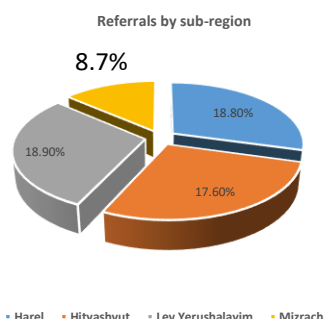
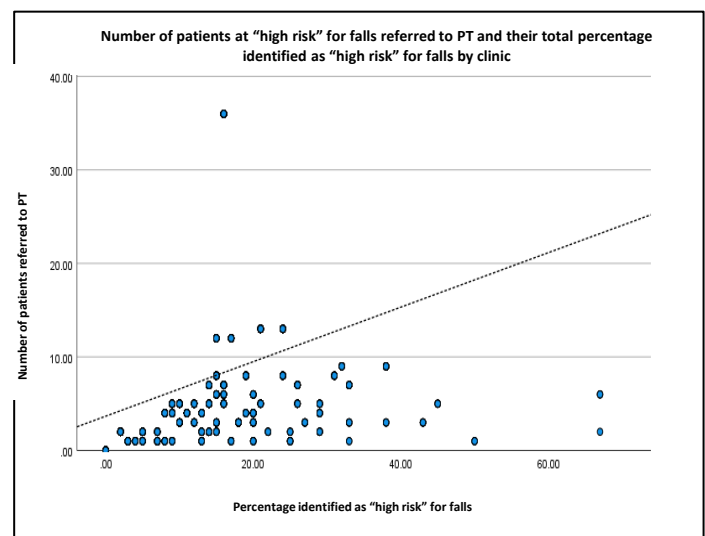
Retrospective observational study of 2404 patients 65 years or older in the Clalit HMO in the Jerusalem region.

### Primary outcome:

The factors: demographic (gender, age and ethnicity), medical history (dementia, heart conditions retinopathy, diabetes, osteoporosis), and socio-economic status on the patients and information on the clinics (proximity to PT clinic and sub region of clinic)

## Results

- Only 7% of the population over the age of 65 were screened for fall risk
- Approximately half of them were found to be at a high risk of falling
- Of the population found to be at risk of falling only 15% were referred to PT
- The factors associated with lower referral rate: low socioeconomic bracket, diabetes and vision disorders and clinics in the Eastern Jerusalem sub-region.
- Referrals per socioeconomic class: **lower: 10.4%, middle: 17.7%, upper: 15.3%.**
- Gender, age and distance from PT clinic are not associated with lower referral rate



## Conclusions and Recommendations:

- It is beneficial to increase the utilization of the screening tools in order to identify patients at risk of falling and to provide treatment
- It is important to encourage family doctors to refer patients at risk of falling to physiotherapy fall prevention treatment, especially among clinics in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and clinics attending to a mainly Arab population.