

## Eli's Rehab Report

### **NEWS BRIEFS: Educate Your Patients About These Fall Risks**

You may be surprised at what's tripping up your older patients. The Journal of the American Geriatric Society published a study revealing that fall injuries associated with walking aides are frequent in the over 65 population.

"An estimated 47,312 older adult fall injuries associated with walking aids were treated annually in U.S. emergency departments: 87.3 percent with walkers, 12.3 percent with canes, and 0.4 percent with both," the study reported.

Know this: Seven times as many injuries occurred with walkers than with canes, and women were injured at a higher rate than men. Also, 60 percent of the falls injuries with walkers and canes occurred at home, the study revealed.

That said, therapists should instruct patients using walking aides on the safe use of such devices -- and home health therapists should focus on safety issues when completing the OASIS assessment, experts advise.

Another risk: Approximately 86,629 fall injuries each year were associated with cats and dogs, according to data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System All Injury Program (NEISS-AIP) gathered between 2001 and 2006. Twenty-six percent of the falls involving dogs occurred while people were walking them, and the most frequent circumstances were falling or tripping over a dog and being pushed or pulled by a dog. Falling over a pet item (e.g., a toy or food bowl) accounted for some of fall injuries as well.

The majority of these fall injuries occurred inside or in the immediate environment outside the home, according to the report.