Identifying stumbles to prevent falls

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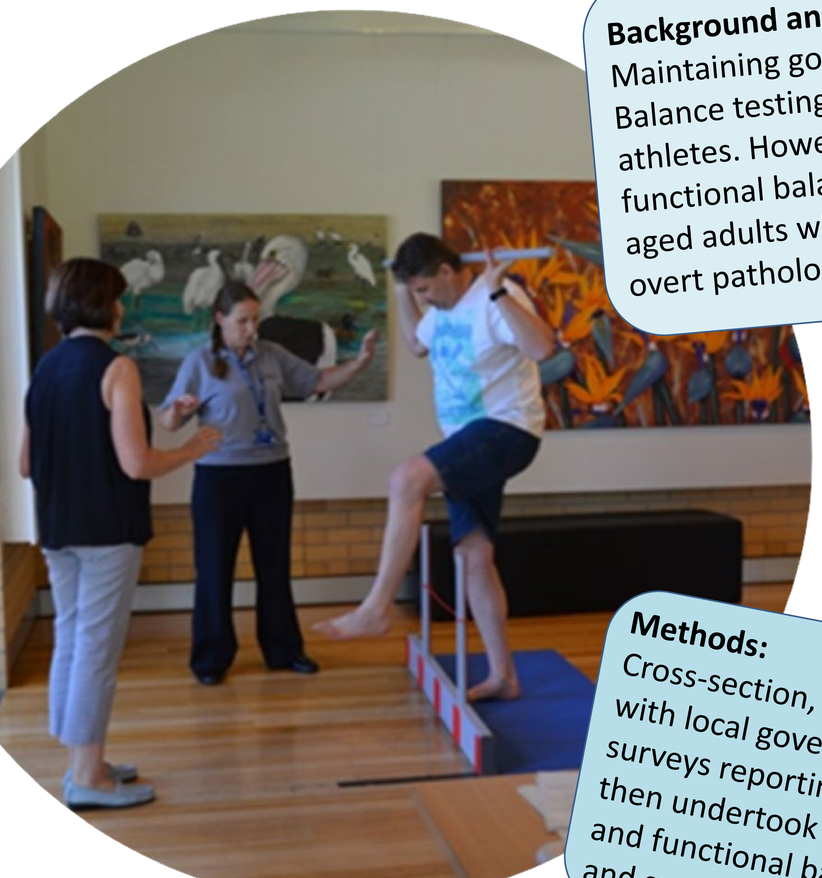

Background and aims:
Maintaining good balance is essential to healthy ageing. Balance testing is established for known fallers and elite athletes. However, there remains no standard way to test functional balance in community dwelling, middle or older aged adults who have no diagnosed neurological deficit, overt pathology and are not known fallers.

Methods:
Cross-section, observational study, conducted in the community with local government and business. Participants responded to surveys reporting fall or near-miss events in the past 6 months, then undertook progressively more challenging static, dynamic and functional balance activities. Odds Ratios (OR), sensitivity and specificity were calculated.

Results:
Participants who had identified a stumble or near-miss were **more than twice as likely as non-fallers to fail** key static and dynamic balance tasks (OR 2.77) and functional tasks (OR 3.16).

Conclusions:
'Stumble' or 'near-miss' participants were **less strong** and **agile** than non-fallers, although **neither group had fallen**.
The identification of middle or older age adults who experience stumbles, trips or near miss events provides an opportunity for **early screening, intervention** and **prevention** of potential falls