

S. NYMAN, C. VICTOR, C. CATLING. *Older people's use of personal fall alarms*. *Gerontechnology* 2010;9(2);317; doi:10.4017/gt.2010.09.02.185.00 **Purpose** With a nationally representative sample, the aim of this study was to estimate use of personal fall alarms in England and explore the characteristics of users. **Method** We conducted a secondary analysis on data from the third wave of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) collected in 2006-2007¹. We selected data from the structured interviews and self-completion questionnaires on use of personal fall alarms. We also selected independent variables to ascertain the characteristics of users as a function of sociodemographics, health, psychosocial well-being, and environmental control. Of the 9771 adults recruited we only included the 4422 adults aged 65+ and those that had complete data on personal fall alarms. **Results & Discussion** Of the 3091 participants 180 (5.8%) used a personal fall alarm. As expected, users of personal fall alarms were older in years than non-users (M=82.34, SD=9.00; vs. M=75.73, SD=7.64) and more likely to be women (n=137, 7.3%; vs. n=43, 3.6%). Indeed, women aged 85+ were the highest group of users of personal fall alarms with a prevalence rate of 19.2%. To a smaller extent, users were more frequently widowed (4.0%), Caucasian (5.8%), those that enjoyed life much (4.1%), and reported a higher number of falls in the past two years (M=5.96, SD=31.12; vs. M=3.30, SD=10.85). Perceived security and propensity to use technology did not influence use of personal fall alarms. Further research could clarify if the influence of sociodemographic and psychosocial factors on use of personal fall alarms is similar to those that influence older people's participation in falls prevention interventions². As there is currently no strong evidence-base upon which to recommend personal fall alarms in daily practice^{3,4}, developers of personal fall alarms need to consider not only the efficacy of personal fall alarms but whether older people will use them.

References

1. Taylor R, Conway L, Calderwood L, Lessof C. Methodology. In Marmot M, Banks J, Blundell R, Lessof C, Nazroo J, editors. *Health, wealth and lifestyles of the older population in England: The 2002 English Longitudinal Study of Ageing*. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies; 2003; pp 357-374
2. Nyman SR, Ballinger C. A review to explore how allied health professionals can improve uptake of and adherence to falls prevention interventions. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 2008;71(4):141-145
3. Barlow J, Singh D, Bayer S, Curry R. A systematic review of the benefits of home telecare for frail elderly people and those with long-term conditions. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare* 2007;13(4):172-179
4. Martin S, Kelly G, Kernohan WG, McCreight B, Nugent C. Smart home technologies for health and social care support. *Cochrane Database Systematic Review* 2008;4; article CD006412; doi:10.1002/14651858.CD006412.pub2

Keywords: alarm, falls, older people, telecare, user

Address: University of Reading, UK; E: s.r.nyman@reading.ac.uk