Narrating a fall: A secondary data analysis of older adults’ stories of falling
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DESCRIPTION

• Background: Parent study paired 12 older adults with university students to produce written narratives about their fall & document how the older adults experience, talk, and write about falls
• 30% of community-dwelling older adults fall each year

METHODS

• Study Design: Narrative study, phenomenological approach
• Participants 3 older adults, 6 students
• Data:
  • The fall
  • Oral stories
  • Written stories
  • Transactional situation with students
  • Student reflections
• Analysis: Non-paradigmatic narrative-type narrative analysis, identifying action units, turning points, emplotment, narrative configuration, drafting lyric poem

“Welcome falls”
Agency & Narrative in action:
• Older adults took action as a result of their fall into agency
  ➢ Using a curb cut
  ➢ Selecting social support
  ➢ Wearing a personal emergency alert device
• Students re-framed the experience of aging

“Un-welcome falls”
Loss & Unknown Territory
• Older adults experienced loss as a result of their fall into unknown territory
  ➢ Loss of consciousness
  ➢ Loss of family members
  ➢ Loss of identity: Falling into a research category
• Students fell into researcher role

RESULTS

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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Potential exists for systems level intervention with young people surrounding the perception of older adults.
2. Fall experiences alter routines, occupational choice, and the meaning of related occupations.
3. Occupational therapists can foster agency through narrative
4. Occupational therapists can honor the value of different modes of sense making.


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“You earnest students at my door, age of my children’s children (how can that be!), have come to gather anecdotes from me, fruit from a leaning tree, from what to you appears the distant land of Elderly. Please understand that I was a whippet once, built of sturdy timber, and, what’s more, hardy as a mule. Sanguine about aging as a rule, I give myself into your hands, aghast to see what has befallen me at last: the most unwelcome fall of all, to fall into this research category!”
- Felicity, older adult participant

“It did make me wonder how we ended up at a place where people do not think they can have a conversation like that with an older adult…”
- Hester, student

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