

Falls Prevention in the Elderly

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A Hidden Crisis?

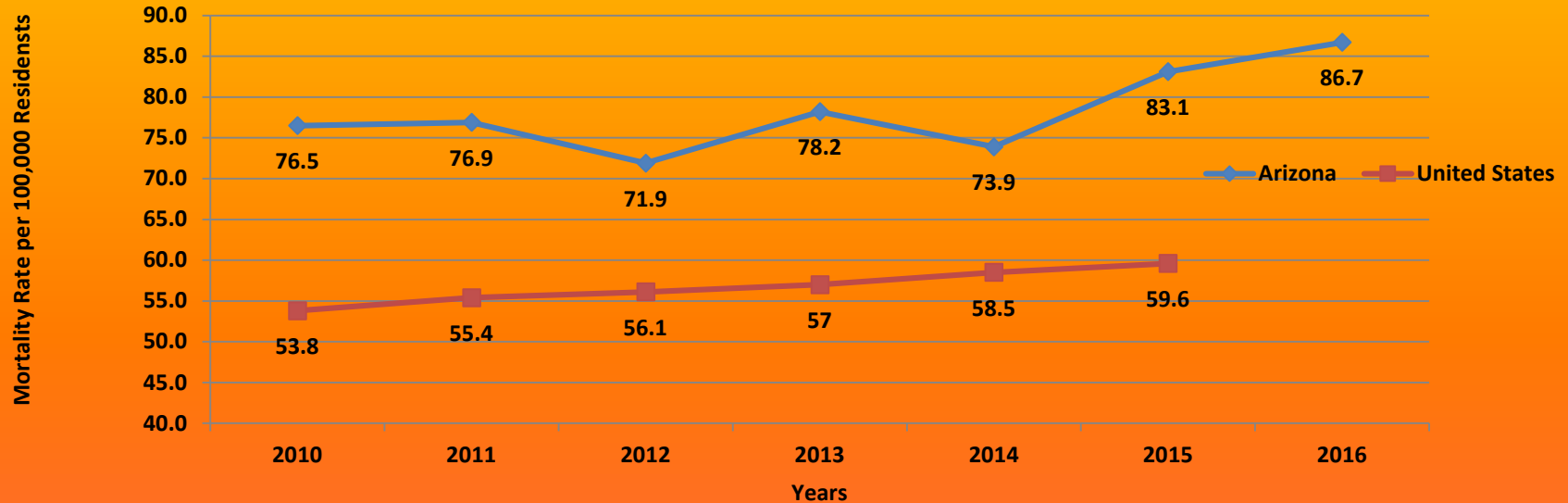
- “Officials scramble to address the hidden crisis”
- “Once dismissed as simply a part of aging, falling has become a growing public health crisis of near-epidemic proportions, posing challenges for policymakers, caregivers and adults of all ages”
- Former president George H. W. Bush, 91, fell at his home breaking a bone in his neck, summer of 2015
- Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, 68, suffered a concussion after falling in December 2012
- Former President Jimmy Carter, 95, underwent a procedure in 2019 to relieve pressure on his brain caused by bleeding from recent falls, also broke a hip and pelvis due to falls

Hidden Crisis in Arizona?

- In 2012, unintentional falls were the leading cause of injury-related deaths among Arizona residents age 65 years and older
- The number of Arizonans age 65 and older is expected to increase **174 percent** from 883,014 in 2010 to 2,422,186 in 2050
- By 2050 the proportion of adults age 65 and older is estimated to be at **21 percent** of the entire population

Falls Mortality Rates - Arizona

Mortality Rates Due to Unintentional Falls in those 65+ Years, Arizona Compared to the United States, 2010-2016



Prepared by ADHS, BCDHP, Healthy Aging program
Source: Arizona Hospital Discharges, 2018

Native American Elders

- Native elders 65 years and older are at a greater risk of serious health consequences following a fall due to higher incidence of chronic disease:
 - High blood pressure
 - Heart disease
 - Arthritis
 - Obesity
 - Diabetes (especially those who have had leg amputations)

State Proclamation

- The importance of falls prevention was raised by Governor Doug Ducey
- In a 2018 State Proclamation: “... over half of all falls, which were not to be an inevitable result of aging, were treated at Level-I trauma centers with costs totaling \$663 million.”
- Urged healthcare providers and community partners to assess older adults for fall risks



Governor Douglas A. Ducey. State of Arizona Proclamation. Falls Prevention Awareness Month. Accessed at:

<https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/prevention/tobacco-chronic-disease/healthy-aging/falls-injuries/falls-prevention-awareness-month.pdf>

Elderly Falls is a Public Health Issue

- “More than one in four older adults fall each year. With more than 10,000 Americans turning 65 each day, falls are a growing and significant public health problem.” - Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

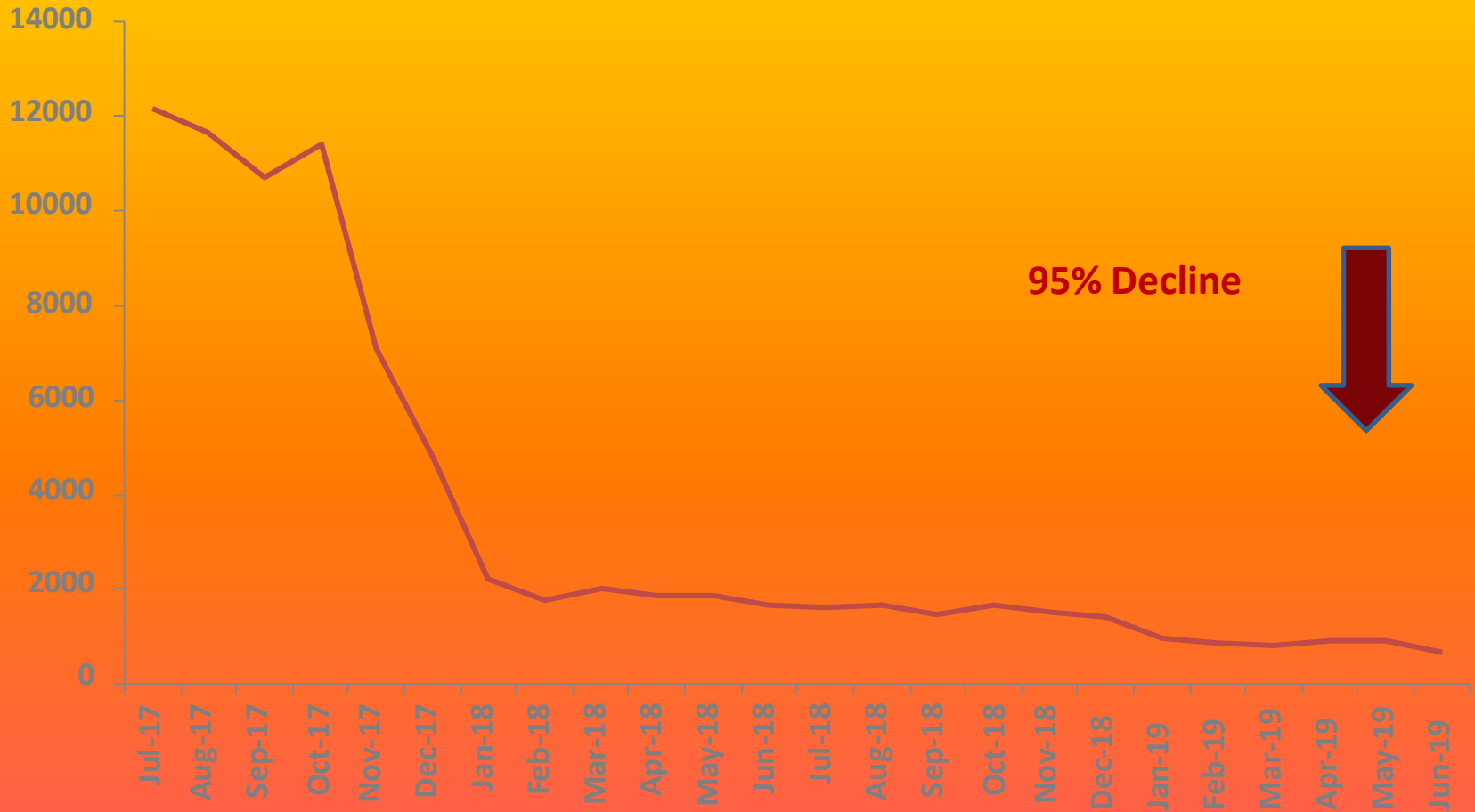


<https://www.cdc.gov/features/falls-older-adults/index.html>

The Opioid Crisis – An Example of Addressing a Public Health Problem

- Arizona implemented a number of steps aimed at preventing and treating opioid addiction
- Through legislative action, executive order, and directly working with the state partners, meaningful progress has been made in implementing policies to combat the opioid epidemic.
- “It’s time to call this what it is — an emergency.”

Number of Opioid Naive Patients Prescribed Opioids July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2019



ADHS. Opioid Epidemic. Accessed at: <https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/womens-childrens-health/injury-prevention/opioid-prevention/index.php>

Arizona Falls Prevention Coalition

“Our calling is to prevent falling!”

- Mission: To reduce risk of falls in Arizona through education, outreach, evaluation and advocacy.
- Goals:
 - Promote evidence-based falls prevention approaches
 - Coordinate efforts to provide technical assistance and increase opportunities for older adults to enhance their quality of life
 - Provide education and information to help older adults in Arizona improve their flexibility and balance, reduce their fear of falling, and decrease the likelihood of a fall
- Policy and Advocacy Committee: To lead public support on causes or policy that impact the population we serve



Arizona Falls Prevention Coalition. Accessed at:

<https://azdhs.gov/prevention/tobacco-chronic-disease/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/index.php#falls-prevention-about>

AFPC Chapters and Community Partners

- **Northern Chapter:** Coconino County Public Health Services District, Navajo County, Fire Department, Yavapai Regional Medical Center, Yavapai College, ALFA (assisted living), Senior Centers Tai Chi for Health, AARP, Managed Healthcare Organizations, Community Home Repair Projects of Arizona, and Adult Protective Services.
- **Southern Chapter:** Pima Council on Aging, fire departments (Rio Rico, Golder Ranch, Drexel, Northwest, Rincon Valley, Rural Metro, Green Valley, Tucson), Pima County-Public Health Nursing, local hospitals (Oro Valley, Northwest, Banner University Medical Center), UA College of Nursing & Medicine, Arizona Center on Aging, Valley Assistance Services, Tai Chi for Health, Community Home Repair Projects of Arizona, and Adult Protective Services.
- **Western Chapter:** fire departments, care facilities and home care organizations, county health departments, and nonprofits serving older adults and adults with disabilities.

Role of Physicians in Falls Prevention

- “We are all one fall away from medical treatment, from hospitalization, from disability, from forced retirement, or a nursing home.” - Fernando Torres-Gil, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, School of Public Policy and Social Research, University of California, Los Angeles
- Falls can be prevented with an aggressive prevention program
- Much more awareness, education, and involvement of physicians in fall prevention needs to become a reality
- “In fact, proper assessment, management and referral could—and should—become the standard of practice.”

Bauer, D. The Role of the Physician in Promoting Fall Prevention for Older Adults. Crittenton Hospital Medical Center, Rochester, Michigan. Michigan Department of Community Health.

Accessed at:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Physician_Brochure_updated_to_include_ICD-10_diagnosis_code_403611_7.pdf

Role of Physicians in Falls Prevention

- Routine questions for patients 65 and older:
 - Have you fallen in the past year?
 - Do you feel unsteady when standing or walking?
 - Do you worry about falling?
- CDC STEADI's (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths and Injuries) a tool and educational material:
 - Identify patients at for a fall;
 - Identify modifiable risk factors; and
 - Offer effective interventions.
- <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/about.html>

Falls Prevention Legislation

- The National Conference of State Legislatures has published a list of fall prevention bills in the United States
- None of them targeted on health provider education

Elderly Falls Prevention Legislation and Statutes. 7/2/2018. Accessed at: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/elderly-falls-prevention-legislation-and-statutes.aspx>

Recommendation

- AFPC enhance partnerships with state medical associations to champion falls prevention education for physicians to improve the quality of life for the elderly population of our state
- State to support adopting a policy for all Arizona licensed physicians to receive falls prevention training as part of CME requirements
 - Training to be implemented in a meaningful and effective manner that will not impose a substantial burden for physicians