

# Preventing falls in people with dementia: What can we do together?

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# What I want to share with you today

- **My perspective on fall prevention for people living with memory loss**
- **What I learned from existing scientific studies**
- **What care partners of people living with memory loss shared with me**



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# What is fall



- **Fall: an unexpected event in which the participants come to rest on the ground, floor, or lower level (Lamb et al., 2005)**

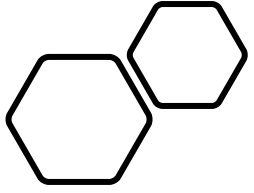
# Why fall prevention for people with memory loss

- **Higher risk of falling than age-matched peers (Allan et al., 2009)**
- **Negative impact on people with memory loss (Shaw, 2002)**
- **Negative impact on care partners (Leggett et al., 2018)**
- **Importance of avoid hospitalization during COVID-19**

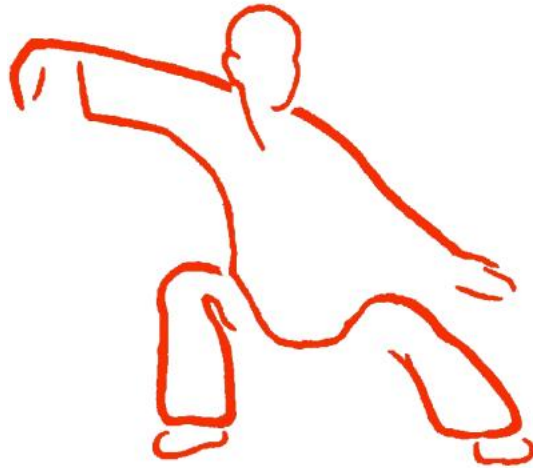
# Why fall prevention for people with memory loss



- **This is our strength - There are things we can do, and we have done!**
- **Other benefits – health and well-being for both people with memory loss and their loved ones (Zhou et al., 2020)**



## Challenge 1: Limited evidence-based programs for older adults with memory loss



### **Exercise**

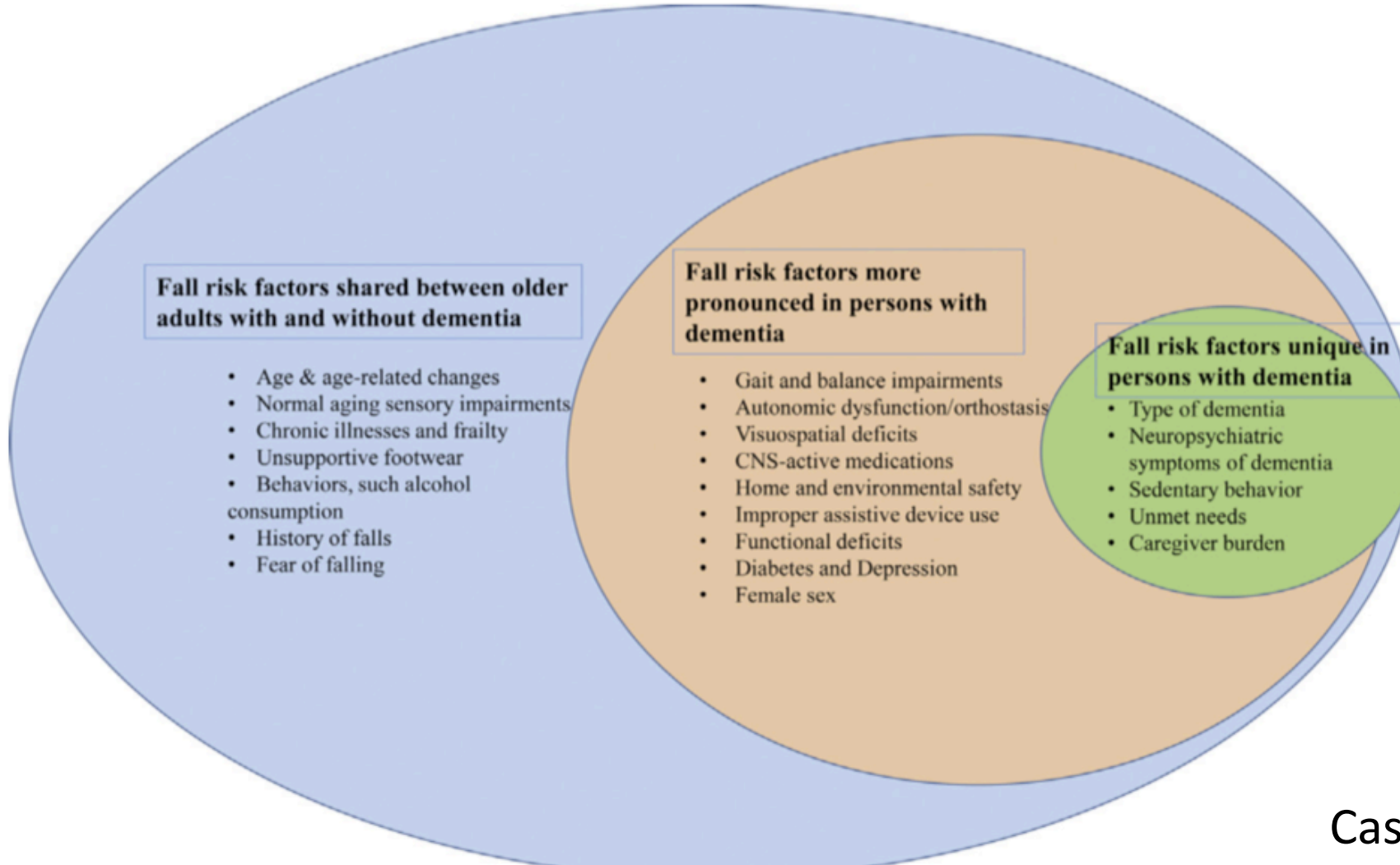
Toulotte, 2003;  
Pitkälä et al., 2013



### **Nightlight path and fall alert**

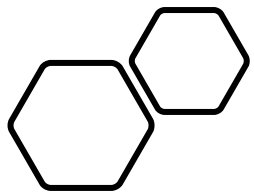
Tchalla et al., 2013

# Challenge 2: SO MANY risk factors of falling



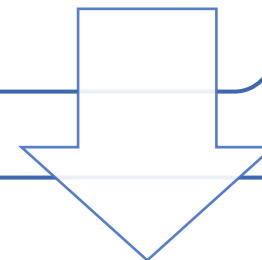
## Challenge 3: It can be a difficult conversation

- **People don't want to admit themselves experiencing fall risk**
- **People don't want to admit their loved ones experiencing fall risk**
- **Fall risk means a lot of life changes might happen**
- **Stigma of having fall, being old, and vulnerable**



# What care partners shared with me

How to start the conversation  
about falls



What we could do together  
to prevent the falls



# How to start the conversation about falls

- **Observing**
- **Co-learning**
- **Listening to the voice of people living with memory loss**



# What we could do together to prevent the falls



Mobility assistance



Medical management



Health promotion



Environment modification



Caring for care partners



Help-seeking



# Mobility assistance

- “Hold his hand”, “let her lean on me”
- **Walking aids**
  - How to deal with the stigma?
  - Negotiate with primary care providers
- **What if people with memory loss don't like it?**
  - They have their own way
  - They accept different people's help
  - They prefer different type of help (e.g., reminder)



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# Medical management

- **Other health conditions related to falls (i.e. dehydration, infections, pains)**
- **Medications**
- **You can initiate this conversation with the primary care providers if you think it might be relevant to you**



# Health promotion



- **Exercise**

- Engage other family members and friends
- Use activities in everyday life (in the community)
- Exercises that all can enjoy (Yoga, Tai Chi)
- Check your health plan

- **Nutrition**

- Develop healthy diet routine early on
- Reminder
- Reduce care partners' care burden

- **Mental health**

- "Make them happy"

# Environmental modification



- **Home modification**
  - Start with small-scale changes
  - Plan with other family members
- **Assistive technology**
  - GPS
  - Fall alert
  - Discussion: are you comfortable with these technologies?



# Caring for care partners

- Self-care
- Social connections



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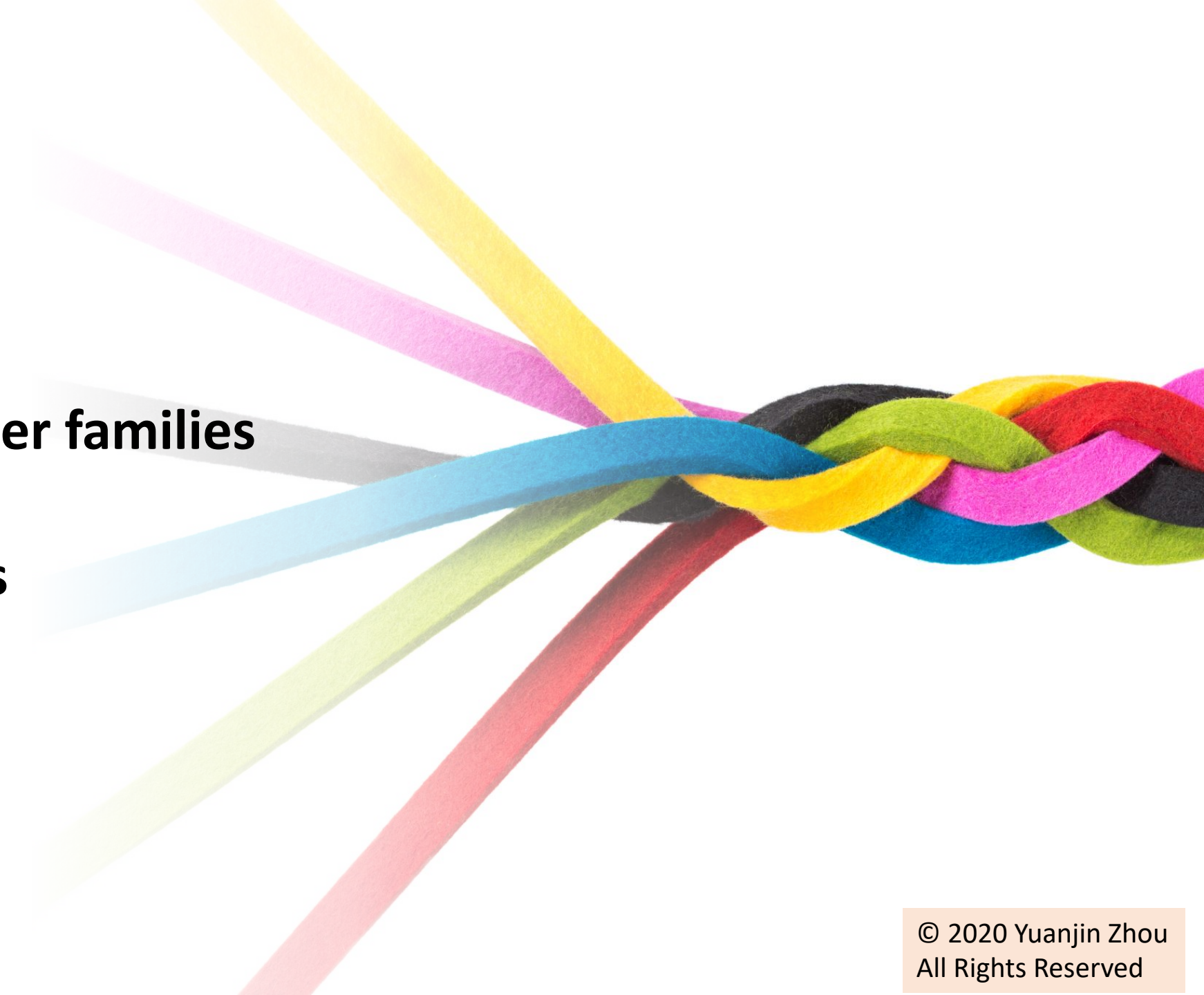




# Help-seeking

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- **Seek help from other families and friends**
- **Direct care workers**
- **Respite care**
- **Support groups**
- **Receiving training**



The impact of  
these efforts  
requires  
further  
examination



Mobility assistance



Medical management



Health promotion



Environment modification



Caring for care partners



Help-seeking

# A lot of things that the society need to do

- Dementia-capable medical care system
- Dementia-capable health promotion policy and services
- Workplace policy to support caregiving
- Housing
- Support for using technology
- Care network support services
- Alternative care options
- Destigmatize fall, aging, and dementia



# Resource page

- Falls prevention conversation guide for caregivers:  
[https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FallsPrevention\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FallsPrevention_FINAL.pdf)
- Falls Risk and Alzheimer Disease: A Patient Guide:  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2020.01.005>

# Questions

- **How do you think we can make the “fall conversation” easier?**
- **What strategies you have tried at home and you find it helpful?**
- **Any questions/suggestions for me?**

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