Elderly Hip Fracture Patients May Be Affected Too

The studies in the Brown University review article mainly focused on "high-velocity trauma," says Aaron. But he and
colleagues are now taking a look at this issue in elderly patients with hip fractures. This population may also have "an emotional and psychological component" related to their fractures, although it's not specifically post-traumatic stress, he tells Eli. "While it hasn't been well studied," information in the literature suggests "that some elderly patients have [a fear of re-falling] after a hip fracture," he says. And the fear "inhibits their ability to participate in rehabilitation."

**Consider These Rehab Approaches**

"Patients who have sustained a fracture often are fearful of falling because they have experienced many direct consequences" of a fall, such as surgery or immobilization, says **Kate Brewer, PT, MBA, GCS, RAC-CT, VP of Greenfield Rehabilitation Agency Inc. in Greenfield, Wis.** In working with these patients, the physical therapist "should resist the urge to discount their verbalized fear, because it is very real to the patient."

Strategies to help patients "work through their fear of falling" include the following, she says:

- "Listen and acknowledge. Let them know you understand their fear.
- Build their confidence. Review the progress they have made in therapy, and reinforce that they have gained strength and have the tools to regain their independence.
- Increase awareness. Ensure the patient is aware of their surroundings, to prevent further injury.
- Celebrate success. When a patient is fearful, praise can help them increase their confidence and conquer their fear."