
POSTER ABSTRACT

Identifying and providing management support for people at risk of frailty in general practice.

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Background: Frailty, associated with increasing age and characterised by diminished strength and function, often remains undetected. Presentations of frailty often occur when a seemingly minor event results in a significant health crisis and unnecessary hospital admission, with substantial associated health care costs. Evidence suggests that targeted therapies may decrease the negative outcomes associated with being frail. In Australia frailty affects up to 25% of people aged ≥ 70 yet a standardised assessment of frailty amongst patients attending general practice is not routine. The FRAIL Scale, developed and validated internationally as a screening tool, requires five simple questions relating to fatigue, resistance, ambulation, illnesses, and weight loss to be answered to identify risk of frailty.

Method: Audit of 282 patients aged ≥ 75 years who had completed annual health assessments in ten Australian general practices, found only 2% had been assessed for all five FRAIL Scale components.

Outcome: To facilitate use of the FRAIL scale a FRAIL Scale App has been developed which can be built into the General Practice clinical support system. Our pilot study is investigating the 1) feasibility and adoption of the App by general practices recruited from two Australian regions (North Sydney/Brisbane South); 2) access to resources/referral options in the community to support identified need; 3) acceptability to providers/patients/carers of the risk of frailty assessment and management approach. The App has been adopted by 17 general practices recruited from the two regions and is an efficient and effective method to identify risk of frailty and provide management suggestions.

Implications: This study is providing an understanding of the services required in the community to support those who are pre-frail/at risk of frailty. A reduced burden to the hospital system, improved health outcomes and quality of life for older people who are at risk or living with frailty are potential benefits of an effective tool used routinely in general practice.

Key messages:

1. Risk of frailty is not being routinely assessed in general practice
2. The Frail scale tool can be easily incorporated into the practice workflow.
3. Risk of frailty management resources and services are required to support the implementation.