The SAFE Clinic: Successful Aging and Frailty Evaluation

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Background

- Frailty is a distinct, under-recognized entity that does not fit a classic organ-specific model of disease.
- Frailty has been defined by Fried et al as a clinical syndrome based on three or more of the following: 1) weakness, 2) unintentional weight loss, 3) slow gait speed, 4) fatigue/low energy, 5) low physical activity.
- Frailty associated with poor outcomes including increased risk of mortality, institutionalization, hospitalization, ER visits, disability, falls, and poor procedural outcomes.

- There is a growing need for Advanced Practice Nurses (APN) to 1) accurately identify frailty in older adults and 2) actively participate in the complex care of these patients as was emphasized by the by the 2004 American Academy of Colleges of Nursing APN competencies.

- The aim of this study is to describe a novel, multi-disciplinary, practice model for:
  1) Frailty assessment
  2) Frailty management
  3) Family and patient counseling
  4) Trainee education

Study Design and Methods

Study Population
- Older adults (≥65 years) who have been referred for frailty assessment.
- Referral source: Geriatrics clinics, primary care clinics, medicine or surgical specialty clinics.

Successful Aging and Frailty Evaluation (SAFE) Clinic Design (Figure 1)
- Annual Evaluation
  - Assessment: Vulnerability, Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Caregiver Support, Pain, Sleep, Cognition, Spirituality, Frailty, Gait, Remove Risk, Physical Activity, Disability, Co-morbidity, Medication Use, Healthcare Utilization.
- Multidisciplinary Team Meeting
- Goal: Determine level of frailty and make patient-centered recommendations and treatment plans.
- Recommendations to Referring Providers
  - Non Frail or “Healthy for Age” - Focus on exercise, nutrition, support, screenings, immunizations, prevention, early planning for end of life care.
  - Pre Frail or “Managing and At Risk” - Focus on specific exercises (resistance training) for strength, balance and fall prevention, home safety, social support.
  - Frail or “Vulnerable! Handle with Care” - Advanced Care planning, hospitalization avoidance, medication review and management, review of benefits vs. burdens of treatments, caregiver support implementation plan.
- Family Counseling
  - 2 weeks after evaluation.
  - Education, Resource sharing, Management of modifiable precipitating factors, APN Help Line for on-going support and care management.
- Outcomes Measures

Figure 1. SAFE Clinic

Study Design and Methods Continued

Figure 2. Trainee Experience

Trainee Education Experience (Figure 2)
- Trainee Population
  - Medical Residents
  - APN students
  - Social Work Interns
- Week 1
  - Frailty Knowledge Pre-Test
    - Baseline measure of frailty knowledge.
  - Frailty Lecture
    - 30 minute lecture given by practitioner or social worker.
  - Observe Frailty Assessment
    - Practitioner administers 1.5 hour assessment while trainee observes. Practitioner coaches trainee on how to perform all assessment tools.
- Week 2
  - Administer Frailty Assessment
    - Trainee performs frailty assessment on new patient referral while practitioner observes.
  - Participate in Multidisciplinary Team Meeting
    - Data collected from new patient referral discussed with multidisciplinary team.
  - Trainee assists in categorizing new referral as non-frail, pre-frail, or frail and helps to make recommendations to referring physicians.
  - Observe Family Counseling
    - Trainee observes feedback session to patient and family from Week 1.
  - Frailty Knowledge Post-Test

Discussion

- Frailty is an under-recognized condition with substantial effects on cost and quality of medical care.
- Advanced Practice Nurses need to be able to identify frailty as it will affect medical recommendations, patient and family education, treatment outcomes.
- The SAFE Clinic aims to create a higher standard of interdisciplinary care by individualized frailty assessments and actively involving older adults and their care givers. It also provides a structured setting for trainee education.

References