Provenance

The Prevalence of Frailty in the Acute General Surgical Setting

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Introduction

Increasingly older and frailer patients are being referred to acute general surgical services. More and more of these people are subsequently undergoing surgical procedures. This is due to better surgical and anaesthetic skills, set in the context of increased patient expectation. However, the epidemiological evidence base for the older surgical patient is very poor, especially in acute general setting. In the UK, there has never been an assessment of the prevalence of frailty in this population.

Methods

In three sites in Wales, England and Scotland comprising rural and urban populations, we studied consecutive patients aged over 65 years admitted to the acute surgery admissions ward. This was part of a wider surgical collaboration regarding surgical disease in the older person, [www.opsoc.eu](http://www.opsoc.eu). We considered any older person admitted to the acute general surgical unit. We did not include patients with orthopaedic, urological, neurosurgical or vascular conditions. We assessed them for baseline demographic data. They were assessed for frailty using the 7 point clinical frailty score derived from the Canadian Study of Health and Ageing.

Results

We collected data on 308 people, mean age 77.5 years (range 65 - 101), 177 (57.5%) were women. There were 29 (9.4%) classed as very fit, 66 (21.4%) well, 62 (20.1%) well with treated comorbid disease, 58 (18.8%) apparently vulnerable, 25 (8.1%) mildly frail, 44 (14.3%) moderately frail and 15 (4.9%) severely frail. Eight people had frailty data missing.

Conclusions

In a large UK wide, representative sample of older people with acute general surgical disease nearly half of them were classed as apparently vulnerable or more severely frail.