Introducing the SAFE Study: Co-designing a Systematic Approach to improving care for Frail Older Patients*

Dr Marie Therese Cooney1, 2, Dr Edin Ni Shé3, Ms Mary McCarthy4, Dr Deirdre O’Donnell5, Dr Nigel Setterl6, Dr Orla Collins7, Dr Graham Hughes8, Dr Lisa Cogan9, Dr Emmet McGrath10, Mr John O’Donovan11, Dr Caolfhionn O’Donoghue12, Dr Andrew Patton13, Professor Eilís McAuliffe14 and Dr Diarmuid O’Shea15

1 St. Vincent’s University Hospital, Elm Park, Merrion Road, Dublin 2; School of Medicine, University College Dublin, Dublin; 3. Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems, University College Dublin, Dublin; 4. Older People’s Empowerment Network; 5. The Royal Donnybrook Hospital, Donnybrook Dublin 4; 6. Health Service Executive, 7. St Columcille’s Hospital, Leighlinbridge, Co. Dublin

Introduction

The concept of frailty, is associated with key clinical syndromes including loss of mobility, falls, confusion, incontinence and polypharmacy. Frail patients are particularly vulnerable to adverse effects of hospitalisation, including deconditioning, immobility, and loss of independence. 1, 2, 3

There is significant agreement in the literature that hospital admission is considered a health risk for older patients: 1

- Ten Days of bed rest for some over 75 leads to 10% aerobic capacity loss and 14% loss of muscle strength. This is equivalent to 10 years of life.
- On average every ward move adds two days to length of stay. 4

Within St Vincent’s University (SVUH) hospital data analysis from the Special Delivery Unit for the period from January to August 2014 conducted on a sample of 362,334 attendances shows that more than one-third of attendances at ED during this period were in the 65+ age cohort, with 12.3% aged 75+ 5. This from a population of over 65s which in 2016 has increased by 19.1 per cent since the 2011 census. 6

Ireland 2016-2011 Census Population Shift

In 2016 for the population aged over 85, the male population increased by 24.8 per cent to 23,062 while the female population increased by 11.4 per cent to 44,493.

This population shift raises concern about whether services will be able to cope with rapidly increasing demand. Recently attention has focused on identifying the best pathways for treating frail elderly patients identified as a priority of the national programme for older persons and the emergency department task force to develop pathways and processes aimed at improving care in this age group. 7, 8

Aim

UCD researchers in partnership with knowledge users in SVUH are collaborating with patient representatives and advocacy groups as well as community service providers and rehabilitation facilities, to develop and explore the process of implementing a model of excellence in the delivery of patient-centred integrated care within the context of frail older persons’ acute admissions.

Methodology

We are undertaking a rapid realist review (RRL) of the literature which is a relatively new approach to synthesis knowledge. 9 For those working within an applied clinical setting a RRL is an appealing approach to enable the unpacking of the complexities of contexts and interrelated mechanisms underlying implementation activities. 10 More broadly the benefits of engaging diverse stakeholders in the co-production of the literature review process is seen within the literature as being beneficial as it provides increased clarity and awareness of the transferability of the review findings. 11 Effectiveness of current pathways and processes in SVUH of unscathed care for frail older people is also being undertaken by reviewing hospital data and undertaking interviews with staff.

SAFE Stage 1

The focus of co-design is on knowledge production and translation (rather than dissemination of findings). 9 One approach to co-design involves developing democratic partnerships between researchers and stakeholders with a view to involving service providers and potential end-users in the design of research, promoting their understanding and capacity, and encouraging uptake of findings.

SAFE Stage 2 Co-Design Approach

SAFE Stage 3 PDSA Cycles

SAFE Outcomes

It is the expectation of the knowledge user organisation SVUH that this pathway would be implemented within 6 months to 1 year. Importantly, we will have laid the groundwork for the pathway to be assessed in terms of achieving outcomes and appropriate implementation. The eventual outcome will also be nationally relevant as it will provide guidance on implementation of patient-centred pathways for frail older people, in the Irish context, which meet standards mandated in national policies.

Public and Patient Involvement

Public and patient involvement (PPI) has been a key consideration in healthcare for several decades now. However, our knowledge of how to invite the public to genuinely contribute to healthcare policy has not advanced substantially in the past decade. Yet healthcare policy and strategy increasingly emphasizes the important role of the patient, and the goal of achieving patient-centred care is high on health provider’s agendas. The project aims to address this knowledge gap by adopting a systematic approach to PPI in the co-design of care pathways for acute frail older patients. Participants for the PPI co-design group will be recruited from the membership of patient advocacy organisations including Family Carers Ireland, Age Action Ireland, SAGE and OPEN. Connection with these organisations and members of the research teams have already been fostered through research collaborations on previous projects. Six co-design workshops are proposed additional workshops may be added as required by the co-design participants.

Workshop Subsections

Workshop Themes

Workshop 1

1. Introductions and review of project aims and objectives. Presentation to the group of the initial literature review and presentation of current SVUH pathways.

Workshop 2

1. Discussion of the groups experiences and understanding of frailty in later life as well as the care of older people in hospital as well as in the community. Problems with existing care will be highlighted as well as discussion of some models of better care practices from the literature.

Workshop 3

1. The development of recommendations and adaptations to a proposed model of care for older people in St Vincent’s University Hospital

Workshop 4

1. The identification of patient priorities and outcomes which should be used for the evaluation of a new model of care in the hospital.

Workshop 5

1. This workshop will be held after the new model of care has been delivered in the hospital. The workshop will involve discussions of the differences derived from this model of care in order to ensure that patient-centred priorities and concerns are being addressed.

References

8. Littlechild J, Mesurier L, O’Donovan S, and R. Romero. 34. Royal Hospital Roscrea, Department of Acute Medicine, General Medicine and Emergency Medicine

* For further details please contact Dr Marie Therese Cooney: mtcocooney@outlook.ie