

Prevention of functional decline and frailty for older people

A European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing priority

WHAT IS FRAILITY?



- Frailty is a syndrome related to the ageing process that describes the state of **“limited functional reserve”** or **“failure to integrate responses in the face of stress”**
- Frailty is a **social care and healthcare challenge** across the EU
- Frailty is associated **with increased risk of:**



PHYSICAL DECLINE
Limitation of physical functions such as staying upright, maintaining balance and walking, leading to disability



FUNCTIONAL DECLINE
Inability to engage in activities necessary or desirable in daily life, leading to dependency



COGNITIVE DECLINE
Worsening of cerebral abilities, leading to delirium, loss of memory and problems with language thinking and judgment

The more vulnerable an individual is, the higher the risk of falls, immobility or disability, institutionalisation and death

FRAILITY NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES



THE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

A better social and urban approach is needed to prevent older frail people from experiencing loneliness and isolation



THE RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

Further work is needed to advance our understanding



THE CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE

Much can be done to prevent problems associated with old age or to help people live well with them, to retain their independence and keep them out of hospital

FRAILITY IS ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE...

BEFORE

NOW

VERY SEVERELY FRAIL



Wendy, 85 years old

- practiced **sport** regularly until her mid 50s
- after retiring **used to baby-sit** her grandchildren
- was diagnosed with **hepatic disease** 3 years ago



- moved in with her daughter 2 months ago and is **completely dependent** on her
- short-term **memory impaired**
- **needs support** from physician and community nurse
- approaching end of her life

SEVERELY FRAIL



João, 74 years old

- was a **construction worker**
- used to **walk his dog** 3 times a day
- has had **different health problems** in the last 10 years
- in the last years was **admitted in hospital twice** for acute asthma and knee surgery



- lives with his 65 year-old wife
- **dependent** on personal care
- **stable** in the last few months with **regular medication**

MODERATELY FRAIL



María, 83 years old

- worked as a **secretary until the age of 60**
- **walked to work** for 30min every day
- avid lover of **crosswords**



- lives with her 55 year-old daughter
- has **no diagnosed diseases** and takes **no medication**
- **lost weight unintentionally** in the last 6 months after recovering from pneumonia
- her **daughter assists her** with dressing, daily tasks and meals

MILDLY FRAIL



Lisbeth, 78 years old

- **took care of the house and family** after getting married 50 years ago
- has **lived alone** since her husband passed away 8 years ago
- had 2 cats



- daughter and grandchildren visit once a month
- **forgets recent events** and **needs help** with managing finances and medication
- **feels tired** and can no longer prepare her meals
- family doctor and community nurses follow her up closely

VULNERABLE



Walter, 68 years old

- was a **university teacher** until retirement 3 years ago
- **has lived alone** since his wife passed away a year ago
- has **fallen twice** in the last few months with no major consequences



- has **difficulties** in daily life because of **impaired vision and hearing**
- prepares his meals, walks, baths and dresses on his own
- **takes medication** for cardiovascular disease

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO ADDRESS FRAILITY?

The **European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing** (EIP on AHA) supports public and private actors across the EU to contribute to prevent frailty through:

AWARENESS AND INFORMATION
campaigns for policy-makers, health and care professionals and relevant actors

RESEARCH
to advance our understanding on:

- ✓ What is the difference between frailty and ageing?
- ✓ What is the relationship between frailty and chronic diseases?
- ✓ What are the determinants of frailty? How can we identify frailty's core components (cognitive decline, functional decline)?
- ✓ What is the role of physical activity and adequate nutrition in preventing and improving frailty conditions?



FRAILITY

PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS
to help people remain healthy, maintain their independence and keep them out of hospital, (e.g. promoting adequate nutrition and physical activity programmes)

TRAINING AND CV/SKILLS UPDATE FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS
to adapt to the challenges of an ageing society

INNOVATIVE ORGANISATION OF SERVICES
including a multidisciplinary approach

IDENTIFYING THOSE AT MOST RISK
on the basis of patient health profile and needs (e.g. screening, early assessment of risk factors, stratification methods)

THE OUTCOME OF THESE INTERVENTIONS WOULD BE INCREASING THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIKE...

Guillaume, 78 years old



- lives with his wife, is **robust and motivated**
- **exercises** and is planning to run in a charity half-marathon
- **takes care of the garden** and house
- takes his medication for **hypertension**

Stefania, 69 years old



- lives with her **chronically ill brother** aged 79
- **feels well and motivated**
- has no health problems and follows annual doctor check-ups
- **swims regularly** and takes long walks every afternoon
- takes care of the house and her brother

Diana, 75 years old



- lives with her husband and his sister, **cooks and takes care of the house**
- feels well and motivated, **baby-sits** for her son
- goes for **walks regularly** and to the cinema with her friends
- has diabetes and follows her diet

The **European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA)**
The European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA), set up in 2012, gathers stakeholders at EU, national and regional level from the public and private sector across different policy areas. Together they share knowledge and expertise on common interests and engage in activities and projects to find innovative solutions that meet the needs of the ageing population.

Under the framework of the EIP on AHA, the Action Group on frailty prevention works to improve the quality of life and health outcomes of older people by promoting a better understanding of frailty prevention and mitigation interventions for older people.

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eipaha/>

