Geriatric Assessment for Nurses

Case-based Teaching guide: Frailty and Falls assessment of Older people

Case-Based Guide

Learning outcomes

- Identify signs of frailty using validated tools.
- Recognize risk factors and clinical clues related to falls in older adults.
- Apply clinical reasoning to analyze a real-world case.
- Perform a systematic frailty and falls risk assessment.
- Prioritize nursing interventions for prevention and management.
- Provide patient/caregiver education to minimize risks.

Sample Case

Patient**:** Mrs. Kamala Perera
Age: 78 years
Setting: Medical ward, following a fall at home.

Presenting Complaint

Slipped in the bathroom while getting up from a squat position. Landed on left side. No loss of consciousness.

History

- Lives alone; daughter visits weekly
- Hypertension, osteoarthritis (both knees), mild cognitive impairment
- Polypharmacy: amlodipine, aspirin, diclofenac (PRN), lorazepam at bedtime
- Reports feeling weak, tired, and walking slowly
- Lost ~4–5 kg in the last 6 months
- Uses furniture for support when walking at home
- Recent difficulty on stairs
- Poor appetite, mostly tea and biscuits for dinner

Physical Examination

- Thin, slow movements

- Gait: shuffling, unsteady
- TUG: 21 seconds
- Grip strength: reduced
- Standing balance: poor
- Blood pressure: 118/70, pulse: 78, vision normal

Home visit report

- Slippery tiles in bathroom
- No grab bars
- Dim lighting
- Rugs on living room floor

Guided questions for students

A. Frailty Assessment

1. What signs indicate that Mrs. Perera might be frail?
2. Based on the Fried Frailty Phenotype, which criteria does she meet?
3. What is her likely **Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS)** score?
4. Why is frailty a key contributor to falls in older adults?

B. Falls Risk Assessment

1. Identify intrinsic fall risk factors in this case.
2. Identify extrinsic (environmental) fall risks.
3. Interpret her TUG score (21 seconds).
4. Which validated fall risk assessment tools should be used?

C. Medication Review

1. Which of her medications increase fall risk?
2. What recommendations should be made regarding polypharmacy?

D. Nutrition and Hydration

1. How does malnutrition increase frailty?
2. What nutritional interventions are needed?

E. Psychological & Cognitive Aspects

1. How may mild cognitive impairment contribute to falls?
2. How can nurses tailor education for cognitive limitations?