



An Invitation to Learn About Frailty

Maria and Anna, twin sisters and roommates on your unit, call you their “favorite nurse”. You cared for them for months and knew them well. One morning Maria was harder to arouse for breakfast and Anna had a fever. Reporting this to the RN led to a quick assessment by the nurse, remaining in bed for breakfast, and a visit from the doctor later that morning. Both ladies continued to decline, developing fevers and a cough and Maria also became more confused. Blood work and a chest x-ray was ordered and the family notified of this change in condition. In keeping with their wishes, recorded in their Advance Care documents, both remained at the nursing home and received IV therapy and antibiotics. In spite of the prompt treatment, Maria passed away later in the week, leaving Anna recovering and devastated by her loss.

Time Out for Frailty

Why did these sisters have different outcomes to the same acute illness. They both had diabetes and arthritis and Maria also had dementia. Their treatment for the illness was the same yet their outcomes were so different. Why?

Frailty, present at some level in all nursing home residents, is the likely explanation for the different outcomes. Frailty begins as the result of the natural aging process, the accumulation of chronic illnesses, and eventually the loss of function and/or cognition. Frailty involves losses across multiple body systems and as frailty increases so does the risk for bad outcomes like falls, weight loss, skin breakdown, etc. The very outcomes we all want to avoid are often unavoidable in the very frail resident. Knowing who is at the highest risk for poor outcomes will help you to know who will need an adapted approach to care and who might change in their energy level from day to day.

“A frail person represents a complex system at the edge of failure.”

Maria’s dementia made her more frail than her sister and increased her risk for sudden decline and death. Frailty matters and impacts all the residents you care for and your understanding of their frailty will make you better at caring for them and will improve their outcomes. Because YOU can make a difference if you understand frailty we invite you to consider completing the [Frailty Certification Course](#) prepared and presented by Patient Pattern and Pathway Health. As you implement what you learn, you will enjoy your professional role more and your resident/clients/ patients will benefit the most from receiving your frailty-informed care.

For more information please visit FrailtyCertification.com or email frailtycertification@pathwayhealth.com.