Falls: A Geriatric Syndrome

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Definition: “Syndrome”

- a group of symptoms that together are characteristic of a specific disorder, disease, or the like
- the pattern of symptoms that characterize or indicate a particular condition

Ex.: Parkinson’s Syndrome, Cushing’s Syndrome, Congestive Heart Failure
Definition: “Geriatric”

- Diminished homeostatic reserve capacity of all organ systems called **homeostenosis**
- In the absence of significant stressors, homeostenosis causes no symptoms and very few restrictions on routine activities
- Progressive risk of homeostatic failure with increasing age
Definition: “Geriatric”
Definition: “Syndrome”

- syn, together, + dromos, a running
- a predictable, characteristic pattern of symptoms or signs that tends to occur under certain circumstances
- aggregate of symptoms and signs associated with any morbid process, together constituting the picture of the disease

Stedman’s
Geriatric Syndrome?

“Geriatric Syndromes are multifactorial health conditions that occur when the accumulated effects of impairments in multiple systems renders a person vulnerable to situational challenges.”

Tinetti, Williams and Gill; Dizziness among Older Adults: A Possible Geriatric Syndrome; Ann Intern Med. 2000;132:337 - 344
Geri-Syndrome Characteristics

- Multifactorial etiologies
- Common risk factors among the syndromes
- Intimate association with functional impairment /decline
- Association with increased morbidity and mortality
Geriatric Syndromes AGS_GRS

- Dementia
- Delirium
- Urinary Incontinence*
- Falls*
- Gait Disturbances
- Dizziness*
- Syncope*

- Hearing Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Osteopenia
- Malnutrition*
- Eating and Feeding Problems
- Pressure Ulcers
- Sleep Problems*

* Classic geriatric syndromes
‘Other’ Geriatric Syndromes

Polypharmacy
Self-Neglect
Elder Abuse
Frailty
Hypo and Hyperthermia
Dehydration and Electrolyte Imbalance
Iatrogenesis
Characteristic: Multifactorial Etiology

- Medications
  - Digoxin
- Poor Vision
  - Can’t read labels or recipes
- Economics
  - Low income
  - No glasses
  - No dentures
- Social Isolation
  - Eating Alone
  - Poor mealtime ambience
- Poor Oral Health
  - Periodontal Disease
- Arthritis
  - Impaired Dexterity
  - Immobility
- Congestive Heart Failure
  - Na restriction
  - Anorexia
  - Fatigability
- Sarcopenia
  - Muscle Protein
  - Muscle Strength
- Depression
  - Anhedonia

Malnutrition
Geriatric Syndrome
Geriatric Syndromes

Malnutrition

Incontinence

Falls

FUNCTIONAL DECLINE
Standard Medical Approach
OCCAM’S RAZOR

“Plurality must not be posited without necessity”

Law of Parsimony of Diagnosis
Let’s Reconsider……..

- Why did Mrs. D fall?
- What is the definition of “FALL” (as a geriatric syndrome)
- How does one treat a ‘geriatric syndrome’ of FALL?
Geriatric Syndrome

- FALL
  - Hyper/Hypoglycemia
  - ORTHOSTATIC HYPOTENSION
  - Acute Illness
  - Neuropathy
  - Medications
  - Arthritis