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Title: Evaluating health professionals perceptions regarding frailty in head and neck oncology

Body: Background: Frailty is associated with adverse outcomes among patients with head and neck cancers. Despite this, frailty is a rarely utilised metric in clinical practice. We sought to evaluate the awareness of frailty among head and neck MDT members and perceived barriers to implementation of frailty metrics in clinical practice.

Methods: A questionnaire was distributed to Irish head and neck MDT members via local mailing lists.

Results: Seventy-nine responses were received with varying clinical experience (<5 years 19%, 5-10 years 27.8%, 10-20 years 30.4%, >20 years 22.8%). Surgeons had the highest representation (29/79, 36.7%) followed by SLTs (21/79, 26.6%). Seventy-two (91.1%) were aware of frailty and 69 (87.3%) correctly identified frailty definitions. Seventy-eight (98.7%) believed frailty could have a role in head and neck care while 76 (96.2%) felt frailty could impact post-treatment functional outcomes. Eighteen (22.8%) had used frailty in clinical practice. Time constraints (58/79, 73.4%) was the most frequent barrier identified to the utilisation of frailty in clinical practice.

Conclusions: Irish head and neck MDT members are aware of frailty and believe it could be utilised in head and neck care. Frailty is not widely used in Irish practice currently with time constraints the greatest barrier at present.

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