

S2.1

Acute Care for Frail Older People

14:30 Convention Hall A

**International Experience in Managing the Fastest Growing Population in Acute Care: Complex, Frail Older Patients***Rockwood K**Department of Medicine, Division of Geriatrics, Dalhousie University, Canada*

Population ageing poses an existential threat to many healthcare systems, especially to hospital care. Most such systems are organized and funded on a model of otherwise well patients, who present with a chief complaint that represents a single organ/single issue problem. Typically, the systems assume that these uncomplicated patients can easily be discharged once treated. "Exceptions" are understood to exist, but are felt not to properly be the hospital's responsibility.

The goals of this session are:

- (1) to illustrate why population ageing and illness complexity are linked, and to demonstrate the intrinsic relation between frailty and ageing. We will review how health deficits accumulate across the life course, reflecting a typically decades-long, subclinical period of slow decline in repair capacity;
- (2) to review how frailty impacts on disease presentation. Here we consider how the "geriatric giants" (e.g. delirium, functional decline, immobility, social abandonment) relate to illness acuity and to how complex systems fail;
- (3) to outline how to screen and assess for frailty in prehospital care and in the Emergency Department. The focus is on usable tools and on obtaining collateral information rapidly and with empathy;
- (4) to illustrate how frailty assessment links prognosis and care planning. We will discuss the interplay between illness acuity and the degree of underlying frailty. This is recognised as a challenging area, and ripe for additional research to provide insights that can help on an individual basis.

This presentation will also make the point that the challenges for better care of older adults consist in not just in a better understanding of the facts surrounding ageing, but in the willingness to engage with the complexity of illness – especially acute illness – in people with complex medical and social needs.