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Frailty Impacting More Than 1 Million Canadians *Consensus Needed to Measure Common Condition*

September 20, 2018, TORONTO – More than 1 million Canadians are living with frailty, but a lack of consistent measurement of the condition is potentially exposing patients to inappropriate care, according to a new report by the National Institute on Ageing (NIA), at Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management.

The NIA's report ***We Can't Address What We Don't Measure Consistently: Building Consensus on Frailty in Canada***, authored by Dr. Samir Sinha, Allan McKee, Ivy Wong, Julie Dunning, and Michael Nicin, shows that frailty is a common condition more prevalent in older populations, which increases an individual's risk of falls, emergency department visits, hospitalization, institutionalization, and death. The problem, the authors argue, is that frailty is not being measured consistently in Canada, which makes it difficult for health providers and governments to address.

"There isn't a single health system, hospital, or home care agency in Canada that is routinely measuring frailty when they deliver care and services to older adults," said Dr. Sinha, Director of Geriatrics at Sinai Health System and University Health Network. "That means that health and social care providers may not know whether a treatment, surgery or service will be beneficial or potentially harmful to their older patients."

The lack of consistent measurement is due to disagreement about how best to measure frailty in clinical settings, with some experts contending that there are five core indicators of frailty: grip strength, walking speed, exhaustion, level of physical activity, and unintended weight loss. Others believe frailty is a result of many different factors and it should be measured using an index of deficits, typically made up of 40 to 70 physical, clinical and laboratory measurements.

The NIA's report urges research and health care communities to come to consensus on a common definition of frailty, and argues that clinicians need to consider social factors, such as poverty, housing and loneliness, which can contribute to how well individuals cope with frailty. The report also shows that proactively and consistently measuring frailty can help health care providers better support individuals living with frailty to remain as independent as possible. The report further notes that Canada already has rich and growing repositories of patient and client assessment data stored with the Canadian Institutes of Health Information that can better support the creation of a national standard method of assessing and measuring frailty.

"Until the research and medical communities agree on a common measurement of frailty, governments won't be able to address it with public policies," said Michael Nicin, Executive Director of the NIA. "Consistent measurement of frailty will also further enable health policy makers to compare data and draw actionable conclusions about how best to address the needs of one million Canadians living with frailty. In the meantime, there are many initiatives that governments should continue to invest in that can support individuals living with frailty, such as Ontario's Seniors Active Living Centres and fall prevention and exercise programs."

The Canadian Frailty Network is leading consensus-building by working to improve clinical outcomes and engaging patients and their families and caregivers, but more work is needed to ensure Canadians are getting appropriate care for frailty.

“Clearly, the way we currently measure and address frailty doesn’t work well for anyone - patients, families, health care providers or governments,” said Dr. John Muscedere, Scientific Director of the Canadian Frailty Network. “The research community needs to come to a consensus around how it measures frailty, and we have made significant progress by being at the forefront of building consensus, but there is still much more work to do.”

[Read the full report here.](#)

About the National Institute on Ageing (NIA) and the Canadian Frailty Network (CFN-NCE)

The National Institute on Ageing (NIA) is a new policy and research centre based at Ryerson University in Toronto. The NIA is dedicated to enhancing successful ageing across the life course. It is unique in its mandate to consider ageing issues from a broad range of important perspectives, including those of financial, physical, psychological, and social wellness. The NIA is also focused on leading cross-disciplinary research to better understand the issues that can lead to the development of evidence-informed actionable insights that can meaningfully contribute towards shaping the innovative policies, practices and products that will be needed to address the multiple challenges and opportunities presented by Canada’s coming of age. The NIA is committed to providing national leadership and promoting a collaborative approach that also seeks to continually establish municipal, provincial, federal and global partnerships with other academic centres, and other ageing-related organizations. Funding for this report was generously provided by Bayshore HealthCare. All of the research, writing, and recommendations herein have been independently produced by the NIA on the basis of sound evidence.

The Canadian Frailty Network is Canada’s federally funded Network of Centres of Excellence (NCE) for older Canadians living with frailty. It is dedicated to improving care of older Canadians living with frailty and supporting their families and caregivers.

CFN is funded by the Government of Canada’s Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) program. The NCE program’s goal is to mobilize collaborations between researchers, industry and other organizations to produce programs and products that further Canada’s economic strength and improve the quality of life of Canadians. As a research network CFN collaborated with industry, health care, academic, non-governmental organizations and private partners to improve the care of older adults living with frailty and support their families and caregivers.

To learn more about the NIA visit our website at <http://www.ryerson.ca/nia> and follow us on Twitter @RyersonNIA



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