



Considering Frailty with Cancer Referrals in Primary Care

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Wessex Cancer Alliance



Wessex Cancer Alliance Frailty and Oncology Project



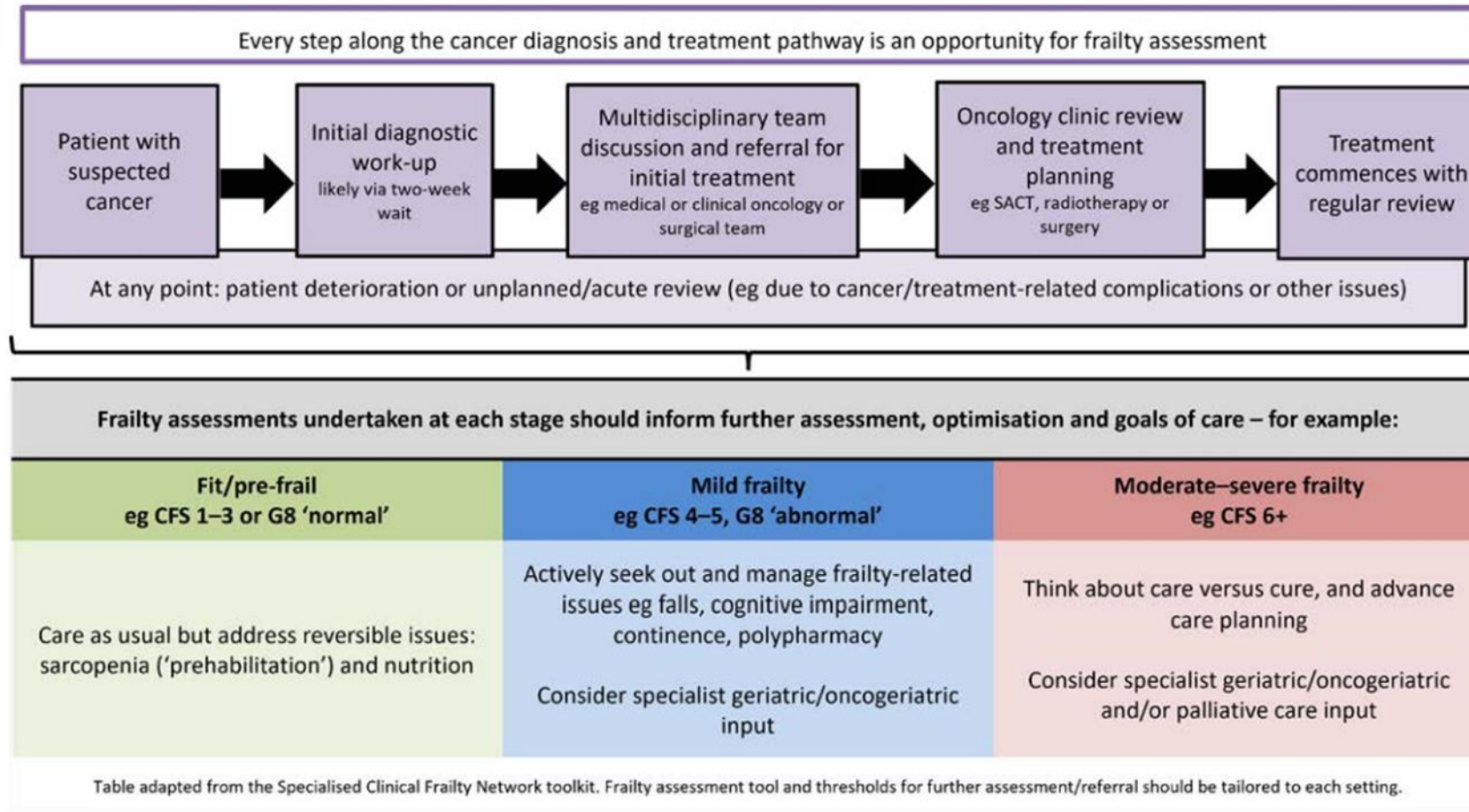
Wessex Cancer Alliance: Frailty Integration Goals

The aim is to transform services across Wessex to **prevent, manage, or reduce frailty** in cancer patients through:

- 1. Routine use of the Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS)** to guide decisions at key cancer pathway stages.
- 2. Mapping frailty and support services** across sectors (Primary, Secondary, Community, Third Sector).
- 3. Building relationships** to enable integrated service delivery.
- 4. Promoting MDT frailty clinics** within oncology and tumour site pathways including the integrated neighbourhood team.
- 5. Addressing training needs** to support implementation and sustainability.



Figure 1. Model for assessing and managing frailty throughout the cancer diagnosis and treatment pathway



JCCO (2024). *Implementing frailty assessment and management in oncology services* | The Royal College of Radiologists

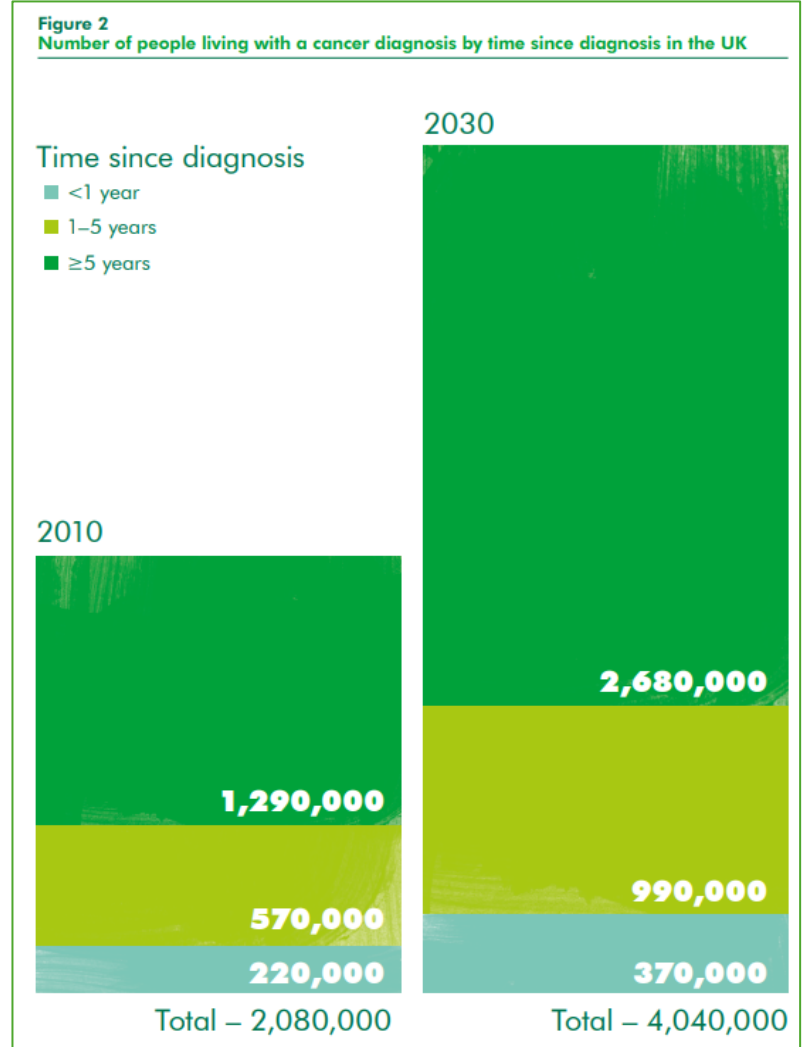
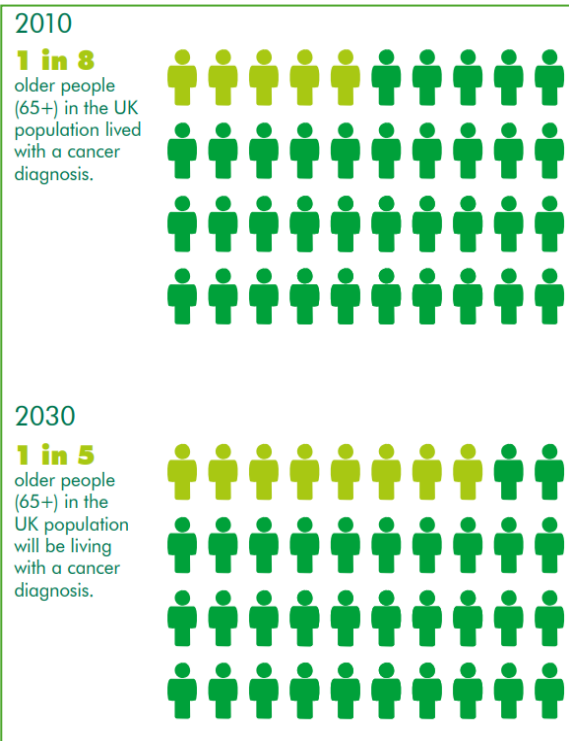


Cancer projections & older people



Older people will account for 73% of the total number of people with a cancer diagnosis

- Complexity
- Frailty
- Multi-morbidity



The largest growth will be in people living more than 5 years with cancer

- Primary and Community care focus

Cancer as a long-term condition

- Support
- Review +++
- Self-management
- Healthy behaviours
- Symptom management
- Late effects

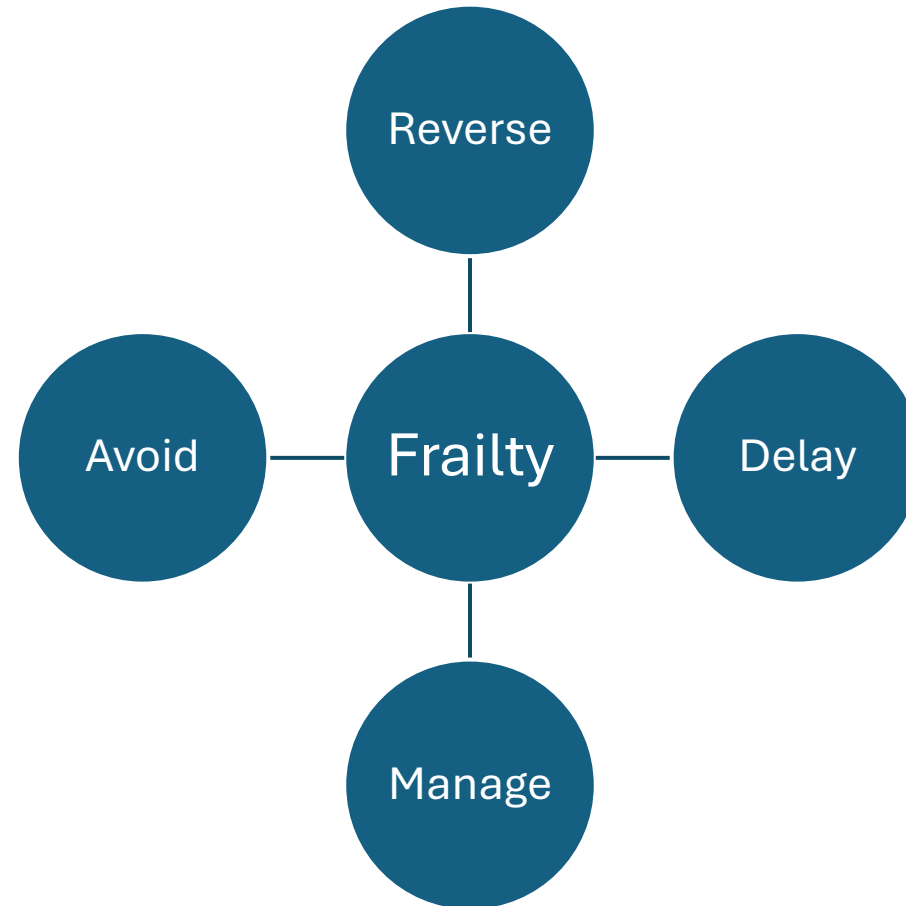
Palliative care responsibilities

- Proactive
- Non-specialist



42% median prevalence of frailty in the cancer population

Frailty is better than chronological age in predicting outcomes for cancer patients



Opportunities:

- Personalised care
- Optimisation
- Completion of treatment
- Improved outcomes

Reduce risks of:

- Undertreatment
- Overtreatment
- Unplanned admissions
- Morbidity
- Mortality



What is frailty?



- Frailty is a distinctive health state related to the ageing process in which multiple body systems gradually lose their inbuilt reserves. **Around 10% of people aged over 65 years have frailty, rising to between a quarter and a half of those aged 85 years (1).**
- A condition or syndrome which results from a multi-system reduction in reserve capacity to the extent that a number of physiological systems are close to, or past, the threshold of symptomatic clinical failure. As a consequence, the frail person is at increased risk of disability and death from minor external stresses (2).



Rockwood Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS)



Evidence of CFS scores association with outcomes

Author (Year)	N	Median Age	Setting	Key Results
Pearce et al (2022) ⁸⁶	514	76 years	Gastro-esophageal cancer, 1L palliative chemotherapy (multi center)	Higher CFS scores were associated with poor overall treatment utility, progression, and death
Philip et al (2022) ⁸⁷	820	≥ 65 years	Various cancers, surgical resection (single center)	Higher CFS scores were associated with longer stay, post-op mortality, morbidity, and readmission rate
Stamatakis et al (2022) ⁸⁸	52	76 years	Bladder cancer, with radical cystectomy (single center)	Higher CFS scores were associated with 1-year-mortality, longer hospital stays, and respiratory complications
Osatnik et al (2022) ⁸⁹	269	69 years	Critically ill patients with cancer on ICU (single center)	CFS scores predicted hospital mortality
Niemeläinen et al (2021) ⁹⁰	161	85 years	Colorectal cancer, elective surgery (multi center)	CFS scores ≥ 3 were correlated with more postoperative complications
Mima et al (2021) ⁹¹	142	≥ 60 years	Pancreatic cancer, surgical resection (single center)	Higher CFS scores predicted poor survival

Abbreviations: CFS, clinical frailty scale; 1L, first line; ICU, intensive care unit.

Goede, 2023

The CFS is a nine-point scale based on clinical evaluation of mobility, energy, physical activity, and function. It is a quick and easy way to assess a person's level of frailty

Ask the patient, their carer/next of kin/paramedics/care home staff what the patient's capability was TWO weeks ago. The assessment should NOT be based on how the patient appears before you today - it is intended to describe their baseline, which in turn informs treatment goals

Clinical Frailty Scale*



1 Very Fit – People who are robust, active, energetic and motivated. These people commonly exercise regularly. They are among the fittest for their age.



2 Well – People who have **no active disease symptoms** but are less fit than category 1. Often, they exercise or are very **active occasionally**, e.g. seasonally.



3 Managing Well – People whose **medical problems are well controlled**, but are **not regularly active** beyond routine walking.



4 Vulnerable – While **not dependent** on others for daily help, often **symptoms limit activities**. A common complaint is being "slowed up", and/or being tired during the day.



5 Mildly Frail – These people often have **more evident slowing**, and need help in **high order IADLs** (finances, transportation, heavy housework, medications). Typically, mild frailty progressively impairs shopping and walking outside alone, meal preparation and housework.



6 Moderately Frail – People need help with **all outside activities** and with **keeping house**. Inside, they often have problems with stairs and need **help with bathing** and might need minimal assistance (cuing, standby) with dressing.



7 Severely Frail – **Completely dependent for personal care**, from whatever cause (physical or cognitive). Even so, they seem stable and not at high risk of dying (within ~ 6 months).



8 Very Severely Frail – Completely dependent, approaching the end of life. Typically, they could not recover even from a minor illness.



9. Terminally Ill - Approaching the end of life. This category applies to people with a **life expectancy <6 months**, who are **not otherwise evidently frail**.

Scoring frailty in people with dementia

The degree of frailty corresponds to the degree of dementia. Common **symptoms in mild dementia** include forgetting the details of a recent event, though still remembering the event itself, repeating the same question/story and social withdrawal.

In **moderate dementia**, recent memory is very impaired, even though they seemingly can remember their past life events well. They can do personal care with prompting.

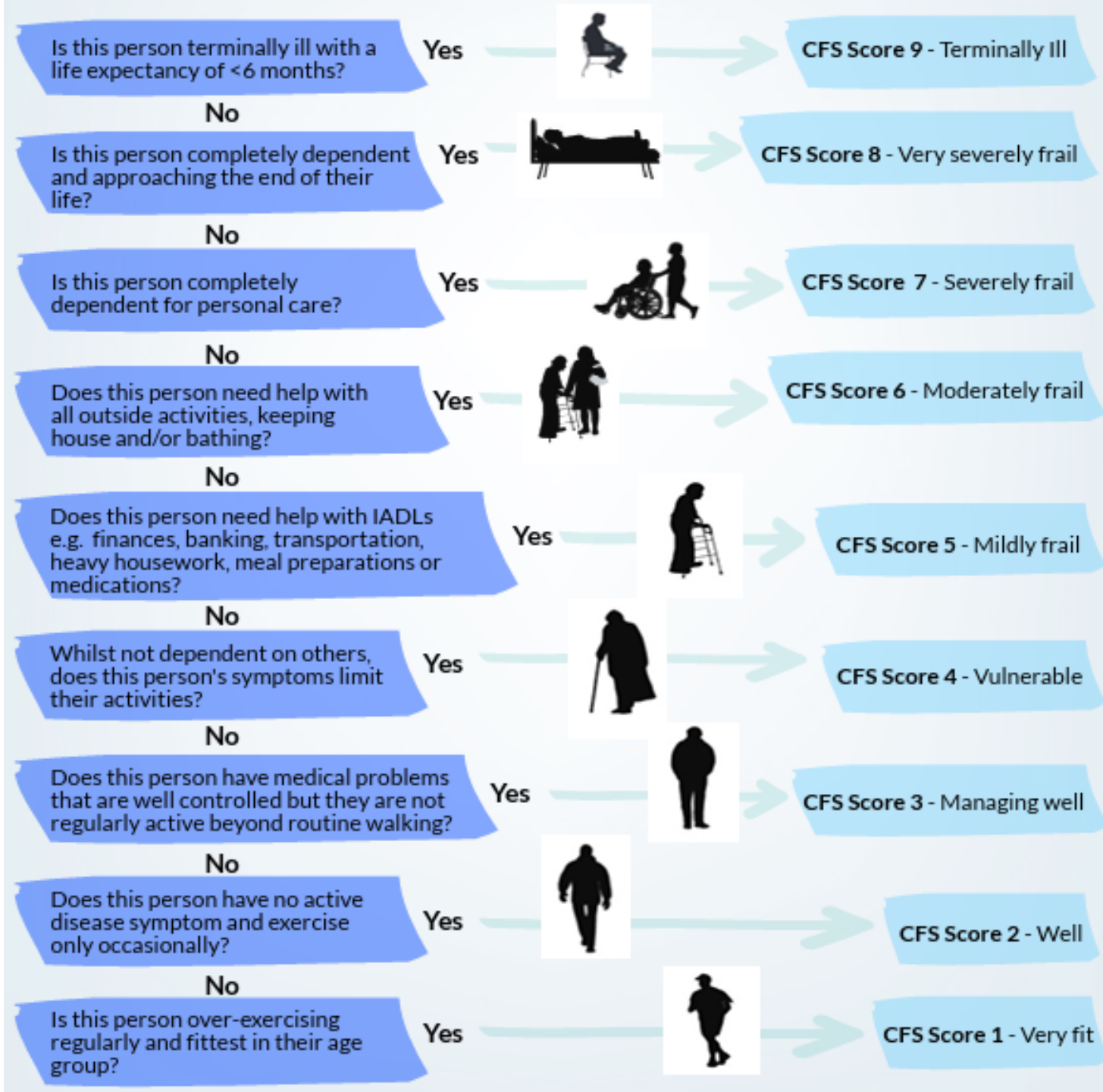
In **severe dementia**, they cannot do personal care without help.

* 1. Canadian Study on Health & Aging, Revised 2008.
2. K. Rockwood et al. A global clinical measure of fitness and frailty in elderly people. CMAJ 2005;173:489-495.

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The Clinical Frailty Scale

A Quick Reference Guide - Flowchart





Don't forget dementia!



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Case Study

- 90 year old lady, living alone, has family nearby who do her shopping, but she is able to some ADLs, meal prep and some housework and has good quality of life.
- Routine bloods done for annual chronic disease review showed IDA and on questioning she has been getting more tired and breathless with some weight loss.
- FIT +ve
- What would you do?



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Case study

- Following discussion, USC fast track referral was made noting: ‘Would be keen for CT colonography to determine if she has significant bowel pathology, otherwise feels she will worry not knowing’.
- She underwent CT colonography confirming cancer. Surgical discussion was had and she did not proceed to surgery but had iron infusion for symptomatic benefit. Palliative procedures were discussed in case needed in future.



USC Fast track referral form update



Wessex
Cancer Alliance

Rockwood Clinical Frailty Scale. Please tick most appropriate box:

Rockwood Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS)
<p>CFS Score</p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Very Fit</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Well</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> Managing Well</p> <p>4 <input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerable</p> <p>5 <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly Frail</p> <p>6 <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately Frail</p> <p>7 <input type="checkbox"/> Severely frail</p> <p>8 <input type="checkbox"/> Very Severely frail</p> <p>9 <input type="checkbox"/> Terminally ill</p> <p>When scoring frailty in people with dementia the degree of frailty corresponds to the degree of dementia i.e. Mild dementia = CFS 5, Moderate dementia = CFS 6, Severe dementia = CFS 7</p> <p>For more information: https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2022/02/rockwood-frailty-scale .pdf</p>





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For more information:
<https://wessexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/using-the-rockwood-clinical-frailty-scale-on-cancer-referrals/>

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