



## UTILITY OF NECPAL TOOL IN IDENTIFYING PALLIATIVE CARE NEEDS IN AN ACUTE GERIATRIC WARD: A 2-YEAR SURVIVAL ANALYSIS

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**Introduction.** Acute geriatric patients often present with advanced chronic conditions and complex needs requiring a proactive palliative approach. The Necesidades Paliativas (NECPAL) tool, centered on the "Surprise Question" (SQ), identifies patients at risk of death who may benefit from palliative care planning.

**Objectives.** To evaluate the NECPAL-SQ in predicting long-term prognosis and guiding clinical decisions, such as pharmacological optimization and palliative care activation, in hospitalized older adults.

**Materials and Methods.** A prospective observational study was conducted on 150 consecutive patients (mean age  $84.7 \pm 6.4$  years, 49% women) admitted to the Acute Geriatric Ward of Baggiovara Civil Hospital (Modena, Italy) between January 1 and March 31, 2023. The NECPAL tool and Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment (CGA) was completed for all patients. 24-month survival was analyzed using Kaplan-Meier curves and multivariate Cox model.

**Results.** The Surprise Question (SQ-NO: "I would not be surprised if the patient died") identified 49.3% (74/150) of the sample as high-risk. This group showed significantly higher frailty ( $p < 0.001$ ): ADL (1.8 vs 3.8), Multi Prognostic Index (2.7 vs 2.0), and Clinical Frailty Scale (7.3 vs 5.5). SQ-NO patients received higher doses of morphine (90% vs 37%,  $p < 0.001$ ) and showed 100% sensitivity for in-hospital mortality. Kaplan-Meier analysis revealed a median survival of 4 months for SQ-NO vs. median survival not reached for SQ-YES (Log-Rank  $p < 0.001$ ). In the multivariate Cox model, the Clinical Frailty Scale was the strongest independent predictor of mortality (HR 1.95; 95% CI 1.37-2.77;  $p < 0.001$ ). Significant deprescribing of preventive drugs (statins, ACE-inhibitors) occurred in palliative patients.

**Conclusions.** The NECPAL Surprise Question is a reliable prognostic tool in acute care geriatrics. It effectively identifies high-risk patients, facilitating timely palliative care and appropriate deprescribing.