

1.6 Reviewing medication need and effectiveness

1.6.1 Assessing the need for preventative treatment in patients with shortened life expectancy or frailty

Identifying patients with shortened life expectancy

Good palliative care is not just about supporting someone in their last months, days or hours of their life, but about enhancing the quality of life for both patients and families at every stage of the disease process.

Identifying shortened life expectancy

- Where 'no' is the answer to the question, 'would you be surprised if this person were to die in the next 6 to 12 months?'
- Where a patient with advanced disease is making a choice for *comfort care* rather than *curative* treatment
- Where help is required for multiple activities of daily living, either at home or in care home due to:
 - advanced organ failure
 - multiple co-morbidity giving significant impairment in day to day function
 - advanced dementia

The Gold Standards Framework from [Living Well/Dying Well](#) provides prognostic indicators to identify those requiring supportive palliative care. The Supportive and Palliative Care Indicators Tool ([SPICt](#)) is an alternative means to identify these patients.

Identifying patients with frailty

The Gold Standards Framework also gives specific information as to what tends to indicate poor prognosis in a number of conditions, including frailty.

Identifying frailty

Frailty is well defined as a 'reduced ability to withstand illness without loss of function'.

The Gold Standards Framework defines this further as:

- Multiple co-morbidities with signs of impairment in day to day functioning
- Combination of at least three of:
 - Weakness
 - Slow walking speed
 - Low physical activity
 - Weight loss
 - Self-reported exhaustion

NICE guidance on identifying frailty can be found [here](#).

There are a number of recognised frailty identification tools (e.g. electronic frailty index(eFI)). Those carrying out medication reviews should use the recommended tool, as chosen by their Board.

The [NHS Scotland Palliative Care Guidelines](#) sets out the consensus opinion on good practice for the management of adults with life limiting illnesses.