Background

Therapists perceived that patients seen on the Frailty Unit were increasing in complexity and time required to manage each patient. A literature review identified that no existing objective tool was appropriate to assess this in our population. Therefore a pilot scale was produced based on existing tools plus therapy needs and time spent with patients. Analysis of data using the pilot scale indicated that there was an increase in complexity and time spent managing patients on the Frailty Unit from April 2015 to April 2016, however the scoring was not sensitive to time, and lacked key elements of perceived complexity reported by therapists.

Aims

This project aimed to refine the complexity scale to enable investigation of a correlation between therapy complexity, frailty and time spent with the patient.

Methods

The scale was reviewed by exploring additional elements of perceived complexity via a questionnaire and focus group of therapists who had worked in the Frailty Unit. Additional domains were added, scoring changed accordingly and the time element removed from the scale as this was deemed an outcome of therapist intervention. Consistency of scoring between therapists was checked to ensure reliability.

A snapshot data set of 20 Frailty Unit patients in 2015 and 2016 were analysed with the new complexity scale to investigate associations between therapy complexity score and time taken to manage patients.

Results

The new complexity scale showed an increased median score for complexity, and an overall 65% increase in complexity from a sample of 20 patients in 2016 versus 2015. There also appeared to be a positive association between complexity score and therapy time in this patient sample.

Conclusion

This refined scale can now be used to measure complexity of therapy input for all Frailty Unit patients. Further data analysis will now be done with a larger sample size to investigate whether statistically significant associations exist between the Clinical Frailty Scale, therapy complexity score and time spent to complete therapy intervention in our Frailty Unit population.

The identified domains of therapy complexity within the developed scale may be applicable to other therapy settings.

References