

A conversation guide for use with older people living with frailty considering surgery

This resource is part of a package to support shared decision-making (SDM) between healthcare professionals and people aged over 75 years who are living with frailty considering surgery. Ideally it is used with the [companion consumer resource](#) to enable a more focussed discussion that includes the patient's preferences, health and social context. The patient resource can be given before or between consultations to promote reflection and discussion with family members. The use of a clinician-endorsed question prompt list such as the consumer resource has been shown to improve SDM and reduce the average length of a consultation.

Please use the notes sections to record the outcomes of discussion and share the resource with other members of the healthcare team (and the patient). These conversations about surgery may occur at multiple points in the care pathway and potentially over several healthcare visits. The resource is designed to be flexible to accommodate these different pathways and models of care.

Older people living with frailty are more likely to have poor outcomes from surgery. It is important to weigh up the options, their relative benefits and harms, as well as the patient's preferences and values in making decisions. Evidence suggests that SDM is an effective strategy for improving satisfaction with surgical decisions and having treatment that aligns better with their personal circumstances and preferences.

Purpose of this guide

Healthcare professionals can use this conversation guide during consultations with older frail people and their families. The guide covers six types of 'talk' for SDM with older frail patients considering surgery. Conversation prompts for each of these types of talk can be found on the next page. The companion consumer guide within this package poses most of the preparation and goal talk questions for the patient and their families to consider before their healthcare appointment. The consumer guide does not explicitly explore end of life issues. These may be appropriately raised within this conversation guide. Endorsing the use of the patient guide and question asking as a healthcare professional enhances the SDM process and improve the quality of care.



Conversation guide

Below are some conversation prompts to use during your consultation with older patients living with frailty considering surgery.

Note: This is not a linear process. Move between conversation prompts according to your patient's needs. Questions that also appear in the companion patient guide are in bold face and marked with an asterisk below. The [consumer resource](#) can help to prioritise key issues for discussion.

Preparation talk	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you know about your health problem that might need surgery? What other health problems do you have? Are any of these health problems stopping you from doing the things you like? If so, how?* Overall are there things your healthcare team has asked you to do that you find <u>unhelpful</u>? Do they <u>cause you trouble or stress</u>? What are they (e.g. medicines, tests, diet, exercises, wound care, other)?* Overall are there things your healthcare team has asked you to do that you find <u>helpful</u>? Do they improve your health and wellbeing? What are they (e.g. medicines, tests, diet, exercises, wound care, other)?* What has happened to you recently with your healthcare? Have decisions been made about your health that you are not happy with? 	
Goal talk	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there someone that you would like to help support you in making the decision? If so, who would that be?* What are your days like when you are not at healthcare visits?* Where do you find the most joy or happiness in your life?* What worries you most about your future?* What is important to you (e.g. having less pain, being more mobile, living longer, keeping your brain function, quality of life, living independently, your culture, traditions and spiritual beliefs, finances, family and friends, or other things)?* Regarding the surgery: 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What questions do you have?* ○ What health benefits are you hoping the surgery will give you?* ○ Do you have questions about what might happen if you do not have the surgery?* ○ What are you afraid of or worried about?* ○ Do you ever think about the end of life? Can you tell me more about that? ○ What kind of treatment do you want to avoid (e.g. if there is a problem with the operation)?* 	
Choice talk	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let me summarise what we have discussed so far and check that I have not missed anything. • There is a choice here regarding the surgery and there is no right or wrong decision. Let us talk about that and decide together. 	
Option talk	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on our discussion, these are the possible options. • In your situation, here is what we could expect each of these options to involve. • The advantages of each are... • The disadvantages of each are... 	
Decision talk	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you ready to make a decision on this? • Do you need more time or information? • Which option are you leaning toward at the moment? 	
Evaluation talk	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me in your own words what we have discussed and decided to make sure that I have not forgotten anything? 	

Are you satisfied with the decision?	
Action Plan	Notes

Copies of this document to be sent to: ☐ Patient ☐ GP ☐ Anaesthetist ☐ Geriatrician ☐ Surgeon ☐ Other

Related resources

- [A guide for older people considering surgery](#). This includes a questionnaire for the patient to complete before consultation with their healthcare professional.
- [Shared decision-making package for older people living with frailty and considering surgery](#)

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Published: April 2023. Next Review: April 2028