Old people tend to be multimorbid (suffering from more than one disease or disorder) and commonly take more than 5 different medications. Despite this fact, little research has been done into how a pill taken for one condition may interact with one prescribed for another disorder, nor are the multimorbid elderly included in drug trials. “Treatment is based on results from people with a single disease, since multimorbid people are often excluded from the trials,” explains Prof. Nicolas Rodondi of the University of Bern. “We have no way of knowing if these drugs in combination are safe. In addition, the elderly have a higher risk of side effects and reactions to drugs because their kidneys and liver are more fragile.”

Safe use of multiple meds
The Horizon 2020 OPERAM project is now studying pharmacotherapy in this high-risk group. OPERAM’s 9 partners, coordinated by Rodondi, are conducting a controlled clinical trial of elderly, multimorbid people in Switzerland, Belgium, Ireland, and the Netherlands, as well as other research on therapies among this target group.

“You need to find good partners in the EU and build an interdisciplinary team”
“One of OPERAM’s outcomes will be a software tool that matches diagnosis and drugs, looking at drug interactions and providing advice for doctors about which meds are inappropriate,” explains Rodondi. Improving the medical care of Europe’s ageing population is not only a moral imperative; with increased life expectancy and soaring healthcare costs, it is also an economic one. “An estimated 30% of people over 80 are readmitted within 1 year after hospitalisation because of inappropriate prescription and poor drug compliance,” explains Rodondi. “50% of those hospital readmissions are preventable.”

Good Euresearch advice
For Swiss R&D institutions and companies interested in applying for a Horizon 2020 grant, Rodondi has two suggestions: “First,” he says, “you need to find good partners in the EU and build an interdisciplinary team with the best experts in the required research fields.” Second, check with the Euresearch team before attempting to write the application. “Our proposal was 150 pages long! Euresearch gave us good advice on matching the proposal exactly to the call text and providing what was expected in terms of content, tables and figures.”
“Euresearch gave us good advice on matching the proposal exactly to the call text”

Prof. Nicolas Rodondi
OPERAM Coordinator, Institute for Family Medicine, University of Bern / Inselspital, Bern University Hospital

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About OPERAM

CONTENT SUMMARY
OPERAM is a 5-year project designed to reduce avoidable hospital admissions among multimorbid patients over 70 years old. The 9-member consortium is conducting a multi-centre cluster randomised clinical trial and other research to optimise data concerning pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapy in this population. One of the outcomes of the project will be a software tool to help doctors determine if a drug is inappropriate for a given patient.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Project Name
OPERAM – Optimising therapy to prevent avoidable hospital admissions in the multimorbid elderly

Research Area
Comparing the effectiveness of existing healthcare interventions in the elderly

Organisations
University of Bern, Switzerland (Coordinator) and 8 partners

Start Date – End Date
01.05.2015 – 30.04.2020

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