

April 2017

Research Success Story



M A K I N G M E D I C I N E S S A F E F O R T H E E L D E R L Y

Medications are often not tested on old people who have more than one disorder (multimorbidity). Excluded from drug trials, the elderly with multiple disorders are taking multiple medications whose combined effects are unknown. As a result, too many of this population land in the hospital due to prescribed drugs. The Horizon 2020 project "OPERAM" (Optimising therapy to prevent avoidable hospital admissions in the multimorbid elderly) wants to change this.

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."

About OPERAM



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Prof. Nicolas Rodondi

OPERAM Coordinator, Institute for Family Medicine, University of Bern / Inselspital, Bern University Hospital

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

Duration

5 years

Project Cost

€6.65 million

Project Funding

€6.65 million

Programme

Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges: Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing

More Information

<http://operam-2020.eu/>

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