



Original Article



Correlation of Clinical Frailty Scale Assessment and in-Hospital Mortality in Elderly Critically Ill Patients Admitted to Intensive Care Units of Private Sector Tertiary Care Hospital

Saima Muzaffar¹, Madiha Hashmi¹, Ghulam Rasheed², Araj Jamil³, Sughand Umer⁴ and Ali Kamran¹

¹Department of Intensive Care Unit, Ziauddin University Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan

²King Fahad Hospital, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

³Department of Intensive Care Unit, Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan

⁴Department of Infectious Diseases, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Institute of Trauma, Karachi, Pakistan

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***Corresponding Author:**

Saima Muzaffar

Department of Intensive Care Unit, Ziauddin University Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan
dctr.saim786@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Frailty is a complex geriatric condition marked by increased vulnerability to adverse health events. In intensive care unit patients, there is a clear correlation between the Clinical Frailty Scale and higher short- and long-term mortality rates. **Objectives:** To evaluate the prognostic importance of frailty, measure the risk of death in the Intensive Care Unit for all Clinical Frailty Scale scores, and methodically evaluate the association between frailty and Intensive Care Unit mortality. **Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted over 1 year (Jan 2023 to July 2023) at the Department of Medical Intensive Care Unit of Ziauddin University Hospital, Karachi Pakistan. Irrespective of gender, all patients of age more than 60 years admitted to the Medical Intensive Care Unit were included. In this study, individuals ≥ 60 years of age had their pre-admission frailty and hospital mortality compared using the Clinical Frailty Scale. **Results:** The median age was 75 years. The overall mortality rate was 9.9%. The Clinical Frailty Scale score indicated that 29.7% of patients were classified as non-fragile, 18.7% as vulnerable or pre-fragile, and 51.6% as frail. A significant association of Clinical Frailty Scale assessment was observed with gender, age, outcome, Acute Physiology and Chronic Health Evaluation score and invasive (mechanical ventilation). According to multivariate logistic regression, patients on mechanical ventilators have a higher mortality rate. **Conclusions:** It was concluded that the findings demonstrated a strong correlation between mortality and the Clinical Frailty Scale among critically sick patients admitted to the intensive care unit.

INTRODUCTION

As individuals advance in age, they exhibit an increasing susceptibility to adverse outcomes, including mortality. The condition known as frailty is characterized by a diminished capacity to recover from stressors, resulting from declines in physiological reserves and dysfunction across multiple organ systems [1]. Frailty constitutes a complex geriatric condition marked by heightened vulnerability to detrimental health events, including an elevated incidence of falls, nursing home placements, and an increased risk of mortality [2]. The incidence of

intensive care unit (ICU) admissions among older adults is substantial, with 41.3% of individuals aged 65 and older, and 65.2% of those aged 80 and above, being admitted to the ICU [3]. Evidence suggests that while older patients often receive greater relative benefits from intensive care interventions compared to younger patients, these benefits are not uniformly observed across the entire population of elderly ICU patients [4]. Research indicates that patients with elevated Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS) score significantly increase their likelihood of dying within 30



days and requiring intensive care services. For instance, a prospective cohort study identified that the 30-day survival rates of older ICU patients were independently predicted by their level of frailty, defined as a CFS score of ≥ 5 , with frail patients demonstrating considerably poorer outcomes than their non-frail counterparts [5]. Furthermore, the CFS has been shown to provide additional prognostic value beyond traditional severity scores, such as the Acute Physiology and Chronic Health Evaluation (APACHE) II, in predicting in-hospital mortality [6]. According to a large ecological study conducted in 21 European countries, frailty is identified as an independent predictor of both ICU mortality and 30-day mortality among older patients, with frail individuals exhibiting markedly lower survival rates [7]. Moreover, frailty's predictive power is comparable to, and at times exceeds, that of traditional ICU severity scores like APACHE II and SOFA [8]. Research indicates that frail ICU survivors are more likely to experience functional decline and increased mortality within six months' post-discharge [6]. A study conducted by Baldwin et al. revealed that among ICU survivors aged 65 and older, pre-discharge frailty was associated with a threefold increase in six-month mortality and a higher prevalence of disability [10]. Similarly, Cuenca et al. demonstrated that frail ICU patients experienced significantly higher mortality rates at one and six months following discharge compared to their non-frail peers [11]. Moreover, research by Geense et al., indicated that frailty levels varied in the year following ICU admission, with a considerable proportion of unplanned ICU survivors becoming progressively frail by the one-year mark [12].

Frailty, characterized by diminished physiological reserves and heightened vulnerability to adverse health events, is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of outcomes in elderly ICU patients, yet its systematic assessment remains largely absent from routine critical care practice in Pakistan. With over half of ICU admissions in high-income countries involving patients aged 65 and above, and frailty independently predicting both short- and long-term mortality beyond traditional severity scores such as APACHE II and SOFA, there is an urgent need to validate frailty assessment tools within local clinical contexts. Despite growing international evidence supporting the Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS) as a reliable prognostic instrument, data from private tertiary care ICUs in Pakistan on the correlation between CFS scores and in-hospital mortality among elderly critically ill patients are virtually nonexistent, creating a significant evidence gap for clinical decision-making and resource allocation. This study aims to investigate the relationship between pre-admission frailty, as measured by the CFS, and hospital mortality in patients aged 60 and older. The primary objectives comprise evaluating the predictive significance

of frailty, assessing ICU mortality risk across the complete range of CFS scores, and systematically examining the association between frailty and ICU mortality. By incorporating frailty into existing risk stratification models, this study aims to mitigate the potential costs of over-medicalization while improving morbidity and mortality outcomes for this vulnerable population.

METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted over one year, with a data collection period spanning six months, from January 2023 to July 2023, at the Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU) of Ziauddin University Hospital in Karachi, Pakistan. The study commenced following the receipt of ethical approval from the Ziauddin University Hospital Research and Ethics Committee (Reference No: 5750722SMCCM). Utilizing a prevalence estimate of 65% [3], a confidence level of 95%, and a margin of error of 5%, a required sample size of 283 was determined using the WHO sample size calculation software. Data were collected through a convenient sampling method. Following an explanation of the study's objectives and clarification that it was non-interventional, informed consent (both written and verbal) was secured from participants or their family representatives. Inclusion criteria encompassed all patients aged over 60 years who were admitted to the MICU. To maintain a focused and homogeneous study population, specific exclusion criteria were implemented. Patients with a duration of hospitalization of fewer than 24 hours were excluded, as their limited stay did not yield adequate clinical data or meaningful outcomes for analysis. Additionally, individuals with neurological conditions such as advanced dementia or those in a vegetative state were excluded due to the significant impact of these conditions on prognosis, which could potentially confound the study's results. Patients admitted for surgical reasons, including trauma, surgical procedures, or accidents unrelated to chronic medical conditions, were similarly excluded. Their outcomes are predominantly influenced by acute surgical interventions rather than the medical factors central to this investigation. Furthermore, individuals with a history of significant organ transplantation were excluded, as their outcomes are substantially affected by transplantation-related factors such as immunosuppression and post-transplant care, which diverge from the general population being examined. These exclusions were intended to minimize confounding variables and reduce selection bias, thereby ensuring a more accurate analysis of the targeted medical conditions. Data collected included demographic information such as age, gender, and the reason for ICU admission. The severity of organ dysfunction was assessed within the initial 24 hours of ICU admission using the

discharged and transferred to home. The rest of the patients were transferred to other wards of the hospital. Among patients who were transferred to the ward, 27.5% were transferred to HDU, 0.8% were transferred to the ICU, 45.9% were transferred to a non-critical care ward, and 1.6% were transferred to another hospital (Figure 3).

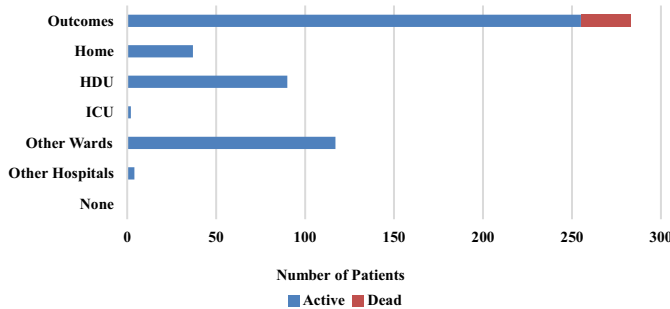


Figure 3: Outcome of Patients Based on Home, HDU, OCU

Table 2: Association of CFS, Odds Ratio for CFS score (CFS) ≥ 5

Variables	CFS			p-value	Odds ratio			
	Non-Frail	Vulnerable or Pre-Frail	Frail		Un-Adjusted	(95% CI)	Adjusted	(95% CI)
Gender								
Male	56 (66.7)	31 (58.5)	67 (45.9)	0.008*	9.826	0.485 (0.285-0.826)	0.009	0.371 (0.207-0.664)
Female ^R	28 (33.3)	22 (41.5)	79 (54.1)					
Age Group								
≤75 Years	64 (76.2)	32 (60.4)	58 (39.7)	<0.001*	30.535	0.258 (0.145-0.458)	1.667	0.227 (0.124-0.415)
>75 Years ^R	20 (23.8)	21 (39.6)	8 (60.3)					
APACHE Score								
<15	52 (61.9)	25 (47.2)	63 (43.2)	0.021*	17.462	0.000 (0.0000)	-	-
15-19	22 (26.2)	18 (34)	41 (28.1)					
20-28	10 (11.9)	9 (17)	32 (21.9)					
>28 ^R	0 (0)	1 (1.9)	10 (6.8)					
SOFA Score								
<6	67 (79.8)	34 (64.2)	97 (66.4)	0.062	5.809	0.489 (0.266-0.897)	0.058	0.516 (0.261-1.023)
>10 ^R	17 (20.2)	19 (35.8)	49 (33.6)					
Invasive (Mechanical Ventilation)								
Mechanical vent	9 (10.7)	12 (22.6)	36 (24.7)	0.035*	7.335	2.649 (1.234-5.686)	21.197	1.956 (0.837-4.569)
Self-vent ^R	75 (89.3)	41 (77.4)	110 (75.3)					
Vasopressors Support								
Yes	16 (19)	10 (18.9)	31 (21.2)	0.894	0.224	1.103 (0.579-2.100)	--	--
No ^R	68 (81)	43 (81.1)	115 (78.8)					
Hemodialysis								
Yes	5 (6)	0 (0)	5 (3.4)	0.191	5.021	0.407 (0.115-1.446)	--	--
No ^R	79 (94)	53 (100)	141 (96.6)					
Outcome								
Alive	80 (95.2)	50 (94.3)	125 (85.6)	0.033*	7.191	0.365 (0.122-1.086)	--	--
Expired ^R	4 (4.8)	3 (5.7)	21 (14.4)					

"Chi-Square/Fisher exact test was applied". "Binary logistic regression was applied". "^RReference group". "p-value ≤ 0.05 were considered significant". "**Significant at 0.05 levels"

The most salient finding is the significant association between elevated SOFA scores and increased mortality. Patients with SOFA scores exceeding 10 had substantially higher odds of death with high clinical significance, with an adjusted odd ratio (AOR) of 0.192 (95% CI: 0.069-0.533, p=0.002). This underscores the importance of SOFA scores as a critical prognostic indicator of mortality, reflecting the severity of organ dysfunction. Additionally, the requirement for mechanical ventilation emerged as another significant predictor of mortality. Patients who required invasive mechanical ventilation exhibited a

The most crucial finding is the strong association between younger age (≤75 years) and a significantly lower likelihood of frailty, as measured by the CFS ≥ 5. Patients aged 75 years or younger were found to be markedly less frail compared to older patients but have high significance, with an adjusted odd ratio (AOR) of 0.227 (95% CI: 0.124-0.415, p<0.001). This indicates that younger patients have about one-quarter the risk of frailty as those over 75, emphasizing the profound influence of age on frailty status in clinical settings. Additionally, gender played a role, with males showing lower adjusted odds of frailty compared to females is highly significant (AOR=0.371, 95% CI: 0.207-0.664, p=0.009), and other factors like lower APACHE scores and the absence of mechanical ventilation were also associated with reduced frailty, though age remained the most pronounced determinant of frailty across the cohort (Table 2).

markedly increased risk of death with high clinical significance, with an AOR of 3.680 (95% CI: 1.506-8.995, p=0.004). These findings emphasize that advanced organ failure, as measured by high SOFA scores, and the necessity for mechanical ventilation are the most powerful determinants of poor outcomes in this cohort. While factors such as age and the use of vasopressor support also indicated higher mortality risks, SOFA scores and mechanical ventilation remain the most definitive predictors of mortality in critically ill patients (Table 3).

Table 3: Association of Outcome Along with Odds for Expired Patients

Variables	Outcome		p-value	Odds ratio		Odds ratio	
	Alive	Expired		Un-Adjusted	(95% CI)	Adjusted	(95% CI)
Gender							
Male	139 (54.5)	15 (53.6)	0.925	0.925	0.963 (0.440-2.106)	--	--
Female ^R	116 (45.5)	13 (46.4)					
Age Group							
≤75 Years	142 (55.7)	12 (42.9)	0.196	0.199	0.597 (0.271-1.313)	--	--
>75 Years ^o	113 (44.3)	16 (57.1)					
APACHE Score							
<15	136 (53.3)	4 (14.3)	<0.001*	0.003*	0.078 (0.015-0.412)	--	--
15-19	76 (29.8)	5 (17.9)		0.034*	0.175 (0.035-0.874)		
20-28	35 (13.7)	16 (57.1)		0.789	1.219 (0.285-5.211)		
>28 ^o	8 (3.1)	3 (10.7)		--	--		
SOFA Score							
<6	191 (74.9)	7 (25)	<0.001*	0.000*	0.112 (0.045-0.275)	0.002*	0.192 (0.069-0.533)
>10 ^o	64 (25.1)	21 (75)					
Invasive (Mechanical Ventilation)							
Mechanical Vent	41 (16.1)	16 (57.1)	<0.001*	0.000*	6.959 (3.066-15.796)	0.004*	3.680 (1.506-8.995)
Self-Vent ^o	214 (83.9)	12 (42.9)					
Vasopressors Support							
Yes	45 (17.6)	12 (42.9)	0.002*	0.003*	3.500 (1.550-7.905)	0.522	1.364 (0.528-3.521)
No ^o	210 (82.4)	16 (57.1)					
Hemodialysis							
Yes	10 (3.9)	0 (0)	0.286	0.999	0.000 (0.000-0.000)	-	-
No ^o	245 (96.1)	28 (100)					

The Chi-Square/Fisher exact test was applied. Binary logistic regression was applied. ^oReference group. p-value≤0.05 was considered significant. *Significant at 0.05 levels

DISCUSSION

Frailty, as measured by the Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS), has emerged as a significant predictor of adverse outcomes in critically ill patients. The prevalence of frailty among elderly patients in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) corroborates the findings of Arias-Rivera *et al.*, who observed a higher prevalence in individuals aged over 70, thereby establishing age as a critical risk factor for frailty within critical care environments [13]. Similarly, Wozniak *et al.*, identified that nearly 40% of long-stay ICU patients aged beyond 65 were classified as frail [14]. Furthermore, this study indicated that males exhibited lower odds of frailty in comparison to females. This observation aligns with the research conducted by Georgakopoulou *et al.*, which noted gender disparities in frailty, with females typically displaying higher frailty scores due to longer life

expectancy and greater exposure to chronic diseases [15]. Additionally, Silva-Obregón *et al.*, reported a frailty prevalence of 18.6% in their study cohort, with a notably higher incidence among women [16]. Patients with elevated frailty scores were more likely to present with comorbidities such as hypertension and chronic pulmonary disease. The robust association between frailty and comorbidities is further supported by Öner *et al.*, who found that frailty, assessed using both the Edmonton Frailty Scale and the CFS, was significantly linked to malnutrition and chronic illnesses in elderly ICU patients [17]. Variations in age demographics across studies, particularly those involving a greater proportion of very elderly patients (over 80 years old), tend to report increased frailty rates, as indicated in the literature [18]. Consistently,

this study revealed that older patients, particularly those aged 75 and older, were more likely to exhibit enhanced frailty scores. Additionally, frail patients demonstrated a decreased likelihood of being discharged home and an increased probability of requiring long-term care. Sankar *et al.*, observed similar results, noting that critically ill frail patients exhibited diminished functional recovery and a greater likelihood of transfer to nursing facilities [19]. The death rates recorded for frail patients in the hospital, in the ICU, and 30 days' post-discharge were found to be 56.6%, 37.7%, and 52.8%, respectively. Such rates are comparatively higher than those reported in prior studies with similar objectives, which indicated ranges of 5% to 36.9%, 10.7% to 50%, and 40.7%, respectively [18]. The current study established a strong correlation between frailty and mortality, with patients categorized as frail (CFS ≥ 5) experiencing markedly worse outcomes. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Wozniak *et al.*, who identified frailty as an independent predictor of mortality among ICU patients, particularly those with prolonged stays [14]. Moreover, patients aged 75 and older exhibited a significantly elevated risk of frailty and poorer outcomes, which is consistent with the findings of Ryan *et al.*, who documented that frail patients, primarily among the elderly, faced considerably higher mortality rates and observed lower functional recovery [20]. Kroken *et al.*, reinforced the predictive value of frailty in older ICU patients, revealing that frailty scores serve as strong indicators of survival [21]. Furthermore, the Sequential Organ Failure Assessment (SOFA) score, a commonly utilized assessment tool in ICUs for evaluating organ failure, was identified as a complementary predictor alongside frailty. The current study demonstrated that patients with SOFA scores exceeding 10 had significantly higher odds of mortality, supported by an adjusted odd ratio (AOR) of 0.192 (95% CI: 0.069–0.533, $p = 0.002$). Theodorakis *et al.*, confirmed that the integration of SOFA with frailty assessments provides a comprehensive framework for predicting mortality in ICU settings [22]. Additionally, it was noted that frail patients admitted to the ICU faced a greater likelihood of having life-sustaining treatments halted or withheld (47.2% compared to 20.7%) [23]. The prevalence of frailty reported by Silva-Obregón *et al.*, [16] stood at 18.6%, which is slightly lower than earlier findings that employed the CFS, documenting rates between 23.5% and 43% [24]. In a study conducted within a Pakistani population involving 377 patients, Ali *et al.*, found no correlations between frailty and obesity [25]. A further study from Lahore reported that 64.9% of frail participants and 2.1% of pre-frail participants exhibited impaired functional activities. Moreover, it was found that 56.7% of participants held a fitness level scored between 0 and 6 out of 10, while 22.7% achieved fitness levels ranging from 7 to

10 ($p=0.047$) [26].

This study was constrained by its single-center, cross-sectional design conducted over a limited six-month data collection period, which restricts the generalizability of findings to other ICU settings and patient demographics across Pakistan. The reliance on convenient sampling, the exclusion of surgical and neurologically impaired patients, and the absence of post-discharge follow-up data beyond in-hospital mortality further limit the comprehensiveness of outcome assessment, particularly regarding functional recovery and long-term survival. Future research should adopt multicenter, prospective longitudinal designs encompassing both public and private tertiary care ICUs to capture a broader and more representative elderly ICU population. Incorporating extended follow-up periods of six to twelve months post-discharge, alongside integration of the CFS with complementary tools such as SOFA and APACHE II in combined predictive models, would strengthen prognostic accuracy and inform the development of frailty-sensitive ICU protocols tailored to Pakistan's rapidly aging population.

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that frailty, as measured by the CFS, is strongly associated with higher mortality, increased dependence post-discharge, and the need for long-term care. Integrating comprehensive frailty evaluations into ICU protocols can enhance patient management by enabling tailored treatment plans, setting realistic care goals, and facilitating informed discussions with patients and families about prognosis. These measures can improve resource allocation and contribute to better overall outcomes for this vulnerable population.

Authors' Contribution

Conceptualization: SM, AJ

Methodology: SM, MH, AJ, AK

Formal analysis: SM, MH, GR, AK

Writing and Drafting: GR, AJ, SU, AK

Review and Editing: GR, AJ, SU, AK

All authors approved the final manuscript and take responsibility for the integrity of the work

Conflicts of Interest

All the authors declare no conflict of interest.

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