Author’s response to reviews

Title: Clinical and functional patient characteristics predict medical needs in older patients at risk of functional decline

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Clinical and functional patient characteristics predict medical needs in older patients at risk of functional decline

RESPONSES TO EDITOR AND REVIEWERS

Editor

We thank the Editors and Reviewers for their insightful analysis of our manuscript and all the helpful comments during the revision process.

Editor comments:"This manuscript has been favorably reviewed but I would ask the authors to address the comments raised by both reviewers."
Please include any more recent references that are of relevance to the introduction and discussion of results.

Also please elaborate on the methods used to determine the sample size and describe in a little more detail how the sample was selected and recruited. This should be included in the Methods under the description of the study sample. Any strengths or limitations of the selection method or sample size should then be included in the discussion."

1. More recent references: "Please include any more recent references that are of relevance to the introduction and discussion of results."

Response

We added more recent references in the introduction and discussion section.

2. Study cohort description and sample size

"Also please elaborate on the methods used to determine the sample size and describe in a little more detail how the sample was selected and recruited. This should be included in the Methods under the description of the study sample. Any strengths or limitations of the selection method or sample size should then be included in the discussion."

Response

We included a flow chart of patients’ selection process and discussed the strength and limitations of our study cohort in the discussion (page 5, line 23 and page 17, lines 1-6).

Reviewer 1

General comment

"I have no suggestions for improvement. There are a few grammatical errors that can be easily corrected. The literature review is appropriate. The Methodology is appropriate and strong. The discussion and conclusions are appropriate. The references could be updated. There is only 1 2019 reference, 3 2018 references, and 2 2017 references our of a total of 49 references."

Response to general comment

We thank the reviewer for the encouraging feedback and stimulating suggestions. We updated the references and corrected language errors.
1. Grammatical errors

"There are a few grammatical errors that can be easily corrected."

Response

We now corrected the grammar errors.

2. More recent references

"The references could be updated. There is only 1 2019 reference, 3 2018 references, and 2 2017 references out of a total of 49 references."

Response

We updated the references in the introduction and discussion section.

Reviewer 2

General Comments

Sabine M Allida, B Med Sci (Hons), PhD (Reviewer 2): "Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. This appears to be a well-designed and executed study. I have some questions and minor suggestions: 1. How did you determine the sample size for the study? Was a convenience sampling method used? If so, you need to discuss this in the Strengths and limitations section. If not, please provide the sample size calculation. 2. How applicable are the results of this study to other settings or the general population? Please discuss. 3. Did you only perform unadjusted regressions? If so, why?"

Response to general comment

We thank the reviewer for encouraging and stimulating suggestions during the review process.

1. Sample size

"How did you determine the sample size for the study? Was a convenience sampling method used? If so, you need to discuss this in the Strengths and limitations section. If not, please provide the sample size calculation."

Response

We now added the sample size calculation in supplemental material. When calculating the sample size, we used the effect size of a model predicting the total amount of physiotherapy,
since studies showed that this outcome variable had the smallest effect size of CGA’s predictive value in multivariable regression analyses.

2. Applicability of the results to other settings or the general population

"How applicable are the results of this study to other settings or the general population? Please discuss."

Response

In the revised discussion on page 16, we described that the non-disease-oriented approach of the CGA is a concept that must be transferred to other medical environments. In different departments, different combinations of predictors may be relevant for medical needs, which is why a complete CGA should always be carried out (page 16, lines 10-20).

3. Regression analyses

"Did you only perform unadjusted regressions? If so, why?"

Response

We performed unadjusted univariable linear and Poisson Regression analyses with each single of the eight predictors. Additionally, we also carried out multivariable regression analyses with different combinations of predictors adjusted for age and sex. However, we decided to show the results for age and sex in the regression models in the tables, but not to interpret them in the text. Within the revised manuscript we rephrased some sentences in the statistical analyses part to emphasize the adjustment for age and sex (page 9, lines 1-8).