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Establishing Biological Plausibility for Cognitive Frailty

by

Lana Jean Sargent

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Medical University of South Carolina in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Nursing.

July/2017

Dissertation Committee

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the past 5 years, I have had the good fortune to work with mentors who were genuinely concerned about my success and believed in my ideas. Each one of them is highly regarded in their own field and is doing their own work to improve and change the world around them. Pam Parsons, Ph.D. and Patty Slattum, Ph.D. were my first set of mentors. Their bold thinking, determination, and willingness to share their wisdom took me on an adventure that changed the way health care is delivered to low income underserved residents in the Greater Richmond Community.

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iv

volumes of knowledge in a five-word sentence. Those five word sentences usually took me two weeks to unpack until in the end I had achieved a completely new and totally awesome skill. I thank you both for believing in my ideas and me.

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I am eternally grateful to my husband Alex and sons James and Benjamin, who joined me on this journey. Alex, always my partner in this delightfully chaotic, beautiful mess we call life. James and Benjamin, I thank you for helping me keep life in perspective.

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

Cognitive frailty is considered a potentially reversible age-related condition characterized by the simultaneous presence of both physical frailty and cognitive decline. The concept of cognitive frailty existing in older adults is indisputable, although the mechanisms and the directional relationship behind the dynamic association remain unexplained. Mechanisms have been suggested, often linking cognitive frailty to cognitive impairment or as a component of frailty but without an understanding of the biological bases for these associations we cannot not move forward with intervention trials.

This dissertation examines the biological mechanisms for cognitive frailty. The study is the first to use a large number of protein and genetic markers identified by a systematic review to define the underlying pathology for cognitive frailty. We use an innovative Boosted trees machine learning technique for developing a population based predictive model. Xgboost is based in boosted trees and provides more efficient and accurate predictive modeling with large datasets and a rapid / robust framework for feature selection. Statistical modeling is used to design, test, and validate an accurate method for and identifying and classifying the features that predict individuals with cognitive frailty. The tree boosting model is used for the evaluation of multiple variables simultaneously and provides a high predictive value with low bias.

The results presented within this dissertation create a foundation of understanding for a new aging condition and encourage translational research focused on the detection and prevention of cognitive frailty.

INTRODUCTION

"I forget what I was trying to say, one word or another gets in the way of the word I meant to use. Nothing stays. So I say something else, I compensate....are these the words I meant to say? But wait, are these the words I meant to say? These words migrate, they refuse to stay in place. This is my new life, my new way, I forget what I was trying to say." Sherman Alexie.

Caregivers of patients with cognitive decline and patients themselves will suggest that their symptoms for memory loss and changes in physical function came long before they received a diagnosis by their provider. A report on the economic implications of cognitive decline estimates in 2015 there are 5.1 million individuals(1,2). With the aging "baby boomer" generation the trajectory that individuals will exhibit cognitive decline will be 13.5 million by the year 2050 in the United States(1,2). Efforts to unravel the mechanisms for cognitive decline have led to the recognition of a unique cluster of individuals who present with the simultaneous presences of both physical frailty and cognitive impairment without dementia(3). Both cognitive decline and physical frailty independently lead to increased disability, falls, mortality, an increase in health service need, and high direct/indirect costs to healthcare, often long-term care and hospitalization(4,5). Individuals with physical frailty and cognitive impairment may have a higher risk for disability than individuals with isolated physical frailty or cognitive impairment. Yet, historically, most research groups have excluded older adults with cognitive impairment from frailty studies(4). The International Consensus Group organized by the International Academy on Nutrition and Aging (I.A.N.A) and the

International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (I.A.G.G) convened in 2013 to identify related domains of physical frailty and cognition and termed the phenomenon "cognitive frailty"(3).

Establishing a model to detect cognitive frailty

The Institute of Medicine Report on Cognitive Aging described a need to develop an operational definition of cognitive frailty for use in research, clinical detection, and public health surveillance(6). A model for detecting cognitive frailty could provide practitioners with the tools needed for early detection and secondary prevention. Currently, the instrumental assessments for cognitive frailty are time-consuming, expensive, and require extensive training, and the clinical translation properties are not $clear(3)$. The translation of the cognitive frailty construct into the clinical setting is limited by the lack of consensus on an operational definition and considerable heterogeneity and complexity in the diagnostic criteria. The primary purpose of this research was to create a population predictive model to gain a more in-depth understanding of the underlying biological mechanisms for cognitive frailty as currently defined by the International Consensus Group in 2013. This dissertation focuses on defining the shared mechanisms for physical frailty and cognitive impairment and establishing a model for determining the presence of risk factors that may predict cognitive frailty in the clinical setting. The model will advance the development of an operational definition by determining whether the potential risk factors at present may predict cognitive frailty in the clinical setting.

Mechanisms behind cognitive frailty

The mechanisms and the directional relationship behind the dynamic association of physical frailty and cognitive impairment or cognitive frailty remain unexplained. Pathological events leading to cognitive frailty years before the onset of cognitive decline may be marked by epigenetic modifications that influence memory-associated gene transcription. However, to date, no investigators have simultaneously characterized the trajectory of cognitive decline and physical function, underlying cellular events that include physiological factors, and epigenetic modifications. The results presented here will further explicate the shared mechanisms, including putative biomarkers for physical frailty and cognitive impairment to enhance our understanding of the shared neuropathology in a secondary data analysis. Such an understanding will lead to intervention studies focused on preventing disability and mortality, decreasing health service use, and improving health outcomes for older adults.

OPERATIONAL DEFINTIONS

The extent to which we can predict cognitive frailty using biomarkers depends on the accuracy that our behavioral markers have on early identification. Screening for the detection of cognitive decline (i.e. neuropsychological) and frailty is determined by the identification tools for defining individuals with cognitive frailty. Individuals with cognitive frailty present with a unique neuropsychological profile, scoring worse on executive and attention tests with individuals having 3 or more of the frailty criteria being more impaired than individuals with only 1 of the frailty criteria(7). This dissertation focused on markers for early detection therefore, definitions used to

establish phenotype sub-groups in this study were structured to detect early cognitive decline including pre-frail individuals using neuropsychological testing focused on executive and attention memory domains. The definitions used are as follows:

Cognitive decline - mild neurocognitive disorders

Evidence of modest cognitive decline from a previous level of performance in one or more cognitive domains (complex attention, executive function, learning and memory, language, perceptual motor, or social cognition) with a modest impairment in cognitive performance by standardized neuropsychological testing or clinical assessment in absence of a diagnosis of dementia $(8,9)$.

Frailty

The operational definition for frailty is defined as a clinical syndrome condition including 3 out of the 5 criteria related a physical phenotype including: 1) weak muscle strength (grip strength), 2) slow gait speed, 3) unintentional weight loss, 4) exhaustion and low physical activity(4). Pre-frailty includes 1 or 2 of the criteria is present, identifying a subgroup of individuals potentially progressing to frailty(4).

Cognitive frailty

The International Consensus Group (I.A.N.A. /I.A.G.G.) report is an acknowledgment of the need to focus research efforts on a clinical condition characterized by the cooccurrence of physical frailty and cognitive impairment, in absence of overt dementia diagnosis or underlying neurological conditions(3). The cognitive frailty construct is considered a heterogeneous clinical syndrome in older adults with evidence of: 1)

physical frailty and cognitive impairment (Clinical Dementia Rating score of 0.5); and 2) exclusion of a clinical diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or other dementia(3). Details on the cut-off scores used to define the phenotypes are explained in further detail in manuscripts 3 and 4.

INNOVATION

An important innovation in this study was the use of machine learning (ML) statistical modeling to build a predictive model for cognitive frailty while further defining the unique features for cognitive decline and frailty. We use Boosted trees, a machine learning technique for supervised learning, these are ensembles of regression trees, similar to decision trees and are used for prediction or classification. Xgboost is based in boosted trees and provides more efficient and accurate predictive modeling with large datasets and a rapid / robust framework for feature selection. Statistical modeling is used to design, test, and validate an accurate method for classifying patients into phenotypic outcomes. The tree boosting model for the evaluation of multiple variables simultaneously provides a high predictive value with low bias. The second innovation in this study is the defining of putative biomarkers related to cognitive frailty leading to a better understanding of the interrelated neuropathology between physical frailty and cognitive impairment. The study is the first to use a large number of protein and genetic markers ($n=289$) identified by a systematic review to define the underlying pathology for cognitive frailty.

Impact of Proposed Research

Developing and validating a model for the detection and classification of cognitive frailty will improve the ability to detect patients with a potentially reversible cognitive and physical decline. Identification of biomarkers and an understanding of the physiological and genetic factors for cognitive frailty will help distinguish between changes related to normal aging, irreversible pathological process, and specific neurological diseases that may be reversible(6). The findings will encourage new research and may lead to effective interventions for the prevention and treatment of cognitive and physical decline in an aging population.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation used Complex Systems Theory as a primary theoretical framework. Complex Systems Theory (CTS) is an approach to science that involves multiple factors that interact nonlinearly to form a dynamic set of relationships leading to physiological change(10). Based in the tradition of ontology, CTS can identify the grouping together of the mechanistic elements of biology and the heuristic elements of philosophy to model the linkages that create a complex concept such as cognitive frailty. Biological mechanisms, proteins or gene expression and their patterns of interaction are inherently complex systems about which numerous empirical data exist (in this case within population databases) that are "dynamic and transformational" vs. inductive assumptions (11,12). Computational methods developed in bioinformatics are uniquely designed to analyze and interpret large amounts of biological data. This dissertation

created a theoretical framework based on the modeling of complex systems using bioinformatics (figure 1).

SPECIFIC AIMS

This dissertation consists of four manuscripts; 1) an integrative review assessing the measurement properties for cognitive frailty, 2) a systematic review exploring the biological factors for cognitive frailty, 3) a population based modeling study establishing biological plausibility for cognitive frailty, and 4) additional analysis of a unique feature from the modeling study and potential epigenetic factor for cognitive frailty; anticholinergic burden's association with cognitive decline, physical frailty, and cognitive frailty.

Aim 1. To determine associations between putative biomarkers and cognitive frailty as *currently defined by the International Consensus Group in 2013 using a focused* secondary analysis of the InCHIANTI study dataset.

1a. Establish a predictive model using statistical methodologies using an integrative approach to precisely define and predict cognitive frailty based on overlapping risk factors for frailty and cognitive decline.

1b. Establish a relationship among measurable physiological, clinical factors, and the development of cognitive frailty.

1c. Establish associations between physical frailty and cognitive parameters (i.e., losses in specific types of memory and mental acuity).

Manuscript 1 includes a comprehensive review of the measurement tools for defining the phenotype cognitive frailty. Manuscript 2 includes a large systematic review of the potential putative clinical, protein, and genetic biomarkers for cognitive frailty. The markers identified in this comprehensive review were used as predictors in the population modeling study. Manuscripts 3, is the population based predictive model analysis. Findings from the model study resulted in anticholinergic burden as a unique predictor of cognitive decline, frailty, and cognitive frailty. Considering anticholinergic medication burden could be a potentially reversible cause for cognitive frailty additional analyses was completed which resulted in manuscript 4.

Aim 2. To determine associations between genetic biomarkers; single-nucleotide poly*morphisms (SNPs)* to explain the phenotypic variance for cognitive frailty using a focused secondary analysis of the InCHIANTI study dataset.

Manuscript 3 includes analyses of genetic biomarkers (SNPs) and highlights the variance seen for individuals with cognitive frailty compared to unique genetic predictors of cognitive decline and frailty alone.

Training Aim3. Acquire the necessary training, expertise, and knowledge to accomplish aims 1 and 2. Goal 1: Apply advanced statistical methods; Goal 2: Develop *neuropsychiatric assessment skills.*

Due to the innovative statistical modeling and bioinformatics utilized in this dissertation, additional training was needed beyond the standard Doctoral in Philosophy in Nursing Science curriculum to build knowledge and achieve stated aims. I completed the bioinformatics 101 seminar series which included training on: high-throughput technology, high-throughput sequencing data types and public data repositories, DNA and RNA-seq applications and analyses, ChIP-seq applications and analyses, and

pathway and functional enrichment analysis methods. The bioinformatics certificate is included in the supplemental documents. Additionally, I attended conference training on Health Measures, which included training on the NIH neurophysiological, and physical measures toolbox and Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information Systems (PROMIS) measures.

Figure1. Complex systems theory for Cognitive Frailty

Tree algorithm

The xgboost algorithm iteratively determines the maximum function of a model based on a tree building algorithm which creates a node then assigns a prediction point to each leaf; the assigned number is termed "gain". Once the model has reached maximum depth, pruning occurs taking out nodes with a negative gain and keeping those with a positive gain. Cover is a measure of the relative quantity of observations found by one feature

Top predictors of Cognitive Frailty

Results are ranked by gain which is a metric based on each feature's contribution in the model. The higher the gain the more important the feature is for prediction of the outcome. Final predictive features included metabolomics, renal/electrolyte, hematological, genetic, inflammatory cytokine, endocrine, and hormonal biomarkers.

Disease symptoms

EXECUTE:
Results provide biological evidence for the relationship between cognitive decline and physical frailty
supporting findings of dysregulation across multiple systems as the potential cause of cognitive frailty.

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MANUSCRIPT 1:

Assessing the Current State of Cognitive Frailty: Measurement Properties

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J Nutr Health Agine

ASSESSING THE CURRENT STATE OF COGNITIVE FRAILTY: MEASUREMENT PROPERTIES

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Abstract: Background: Currently, an estimated 25-30% of people ages 85 or older have dementia, with a projected 115 million people worldwide living with dementia by 2050. With this worldwide phenomenon fast approaching, early detection of at-risk older adults and development of interventions focused on preventing loss in quality of life are increasingly important. A new construct defined by the International Consensus Group (I.A.N.A/I.A.G.G) as «cognitive frailty» combines domains of physical frailty with cognitive impairment and provides a framework for research that may provide a means to identify individuals with cognitive impairment caused by nonneurodegenerative conditions. Using the integrative review method of Whittemore and Knafl., 2005 this study examines and appraises the optimal measures for detecting cognitive frailty in clinical 2000 and study countinues and approach ine optimal inceasing or detecting published, CINAHL, Web of populations of older adults. *Methods*: The integrative review was conducted using PubMed, CINAHL, Web of Science, PsycInf and key words were conducted. Following the initial review, 168 articles did not meet the inclusion criteria for association of frailty and cognition. Of the 18 fulltext articles reviewed, 11 articles met the inclusion criteria; these articles were reviewed in-depth to determine validity and reliability of the cognitive frailty measures. Results: Predictive validity was established by the studies reviewed in four main areas: frailty and type of dementia MCI (OR 7.4, 95% CI 4.2-13.2), vascular dementia (OR 6.7, 95% CI 1.6-27.4) and Alzheime dementia (OR 3.2, 95% CI 1.7-6.2), frailty and vascular dementia (VaAD) is further supported by the rate of change in frailty x macroinfarcts ($r = 0.032$, $p < 0.001$); frailty and the individual domains of cognitive function established with the relationship of neurocognitive speed and change in cognition using regression coefficients; individual components of frailty and individual domains of cognitive function associations inculded slow gait and executive function (β -0.20, $p < 0.008$), attention (β -0.25 $p < 0.008$), processing speed (β -0.16, $p < 0.008$), word recall (β - 0.18, $p = 0.02$), and logical memory ($\beta = 0.04$, $p = 0.04$). Weak grip was predictive for changes in executive function (β - 0.16, $p = 0.008$). Physical activity was associated with changes in exec $(\beta = -0.18, p = 0.02)$ and word recall $(\beta = 0.17, p = 0.02)$, individual components of frailty and global cognitive function were found in several studies which included grip strength $(r = -0.51, p < 0.001)$, gait speed $(r = -0.067, p < 0.001)$, and exhaustion (β - 0.18, $p < 0.008$). Conclusions: This paper presents the first-known review o the measurement properties for the cognitive frailty construct since the published results from the International Consensus Group (I.A.N.A/I.A.G.G). Evidence presented in this review continues to support the link between
physical frailty and cognition with developing validity to support distinct relationships between components of physical frailty and cognitive decline. Results call attention to inconsistencies in reporting of reliability, validity, and heterogeneity in the measurements and operational definition for cognitive frailty. Further research is needed to establish an operational definition and develop psychometrically appropriate clinical measures to construct an understanding of the relationship between physical frailty and cognitive decline.

Key words: Cognitive decline, physical frailty, measurements, cognitive frailty

Introduction

impairment (2-4).

With the number of individuals ages 80 and older on the rise, the burden of dementia is expected to be one of the most daunting and costly consequences of longer life expectancies. Early detection of at-risk older adults and the development of interventions focused on preventing loss in quality of life are increasingly more important. Diagnosing dementia, especially in the early stages of the disease is difficult; many cases go undiagnosed even in the intermediate or more advanced stages (1). This is partly because dementia is a complex condition that cannot be attributed to a single functional or cognitive domain and the need to better understand the underlying Received September 28, 2015
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The relationship between physical frailty and cognitive impairment has become increasingly more apparent with recent studies suggesting that the two are interrelated. Efforts focused on understanding the relationship may provide a means to identify individuals with cognitive impairment caused by nonneurodegenerative conditions which might be reversible (2, 3). Although, frailty and cognitive impairment have been shown to be related, both constructs have long been studied separately (3). To address this gap, the International Consensus Group organized by the International Academy on Nutrition and Aging (I.A.N.A) and the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (I.A.G.G) convened on April 16th, 2013 in an effort to identify domains of physical frailty and cognition. Additionally, the consensus group recommended formal assessments based on studies that supported findings of an association between progressive physical frailty and cognitive impairment in older adults. The new construct called cognitive frailty (3), extends the physical frailty construct with a formal cognitive assessment and a comprehensive assessment of depressive symptoms.

The construct cognitive frailty, will provide new opportunities for research, assist in further defining cognitive impairment related to physical causes, and promote interventions that lead to improved quality of life in older adults. Multiple studies have been conducted to develop clinical screening tools for the detection of cognitive and functional decline independently, with many clinical screening instruments available to clinicians. However, the optimal measures or combination of measures to accurately detect cognitive frailty in the clinical setting is unclear (3). As researchers attempt to deconstruct the relationship between physical frailty and cognitive impairment, the emphasis must be placed on evaluating the strength of the psychometric tests used to evaluate the new construct. The purpose of this integrative review was to examine the literature to determine progress in the establishment of validity and reliability for the measurement of cognitive frailty.

Operational and Theoretical Definitions

Establishing a comprehensive understanding of the new construct cognitive frailty requires a critical review of what is known about the consensus on operational definitions and tools used to study frailty and cognitive impairment individually.

Frailty

The first definition of frailty was proposed in 1988 (6), but since that time the international community has come to no consensus on a definition of the term or an assessment tool to measure the condition (7). The International (I.A.N.A.) Task Force on Frailty identified 17 cohort-based definitions, all using different frailty assessment tools. More recently, Rodríguez-Mañas et al, 2013 attempted to achieve consensus for an operational definition using a Delphi process, which resulted in consensus on the value of screening for physical frailty in the following six domains: physical performance, including gait speed and mobility, nutritional status, mental health, and cognition. Because there is still a need to identify a specific combination of clinical and laboratory biomarkers for a diagnosis, an operational definition was not recommended (8). Even though consensus has not been reached regarding an operational definition of frailty, the theoretical definition, which is generally agreed upon, describes frailty as a multidimensional geriatric syndrome with increased vulnerability to stressors as a result of reduced capacity of different physiological systems with adverse health outcomes that include falls, disability, hospitalizations, and mortality (7, 9, 10).

The criteria used to identify frailty often depend on the operational definition. The commonly-known criterion is the "phenotypic" definition developed by the work completed in the Cardiovascular Health Study (CHS) (5, 11). The CHS phenotype includes decline in lean body mass, strength, endurance, balance, walking performance, and low activity (5). It allows for a continuous scoring system versus a nominal system because it can capture the multidimentional nature of frailty. The components have concurrent and predictive validity with hazard ratios (HR) ranging from $1.82-4.46$ ($p < 0.05$) for outcomes that include incident disease, hospitalization, falls, disability and mortality in community-dwelling older adults (5). Additionally, the CHS model has positive predictive validity (PPV) in detection of physical limitations. The Edmonton Frail Scale (EFS) includes evaluation of the social support domain and has been validated with non-specialists with no formal training in geriatric care (12). Construct validity for the EFS for detection of physical performance was statistically significant $(r = -0.58, p = 0.006, n=21)$ along with inter-rater reliability (k = 0.77, p = 0.0001) and internal consistency (Cronbach α $= 0.6212$. However, the use of the EFS for the detection of cognitive impairment ($r = -0.005$, $p = 0.801$, $n=30$) was not statistically significant (12).

Other validated frailty instruments with unique operational definitions have been described in the literature: the Frailty Index (FI), Clinical Frailty Scale, Study of Osteoporotic Fractures (SOF), SPPB (gait speed, repeated chair stands, and tandem balance tests) validated in the Established Population for Epidemiologic Studies of the Elderly (EPESSE), and Tilburg Frailty Indicator (TFI) which includes three frailty domains (physical, psychological and social) (13-16). Several frailty assessment tools are time consuming, not practical except for research purposes, and have slightly different measurement properties. The literature reflects the lack of consensus and ongoing debate about how to operationalize a definition for frailty (17).

Cognitive Impairment

The theoretical and operational definition for the progressive loss of memory unrelated to the normal aging process has been controversial. Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) was first proposed by Petersen et al, 1999 then revised with the International Working Group on Mild Cognitive Impairment (19). MCI is the most commonly used term to describe a progressive measurable change in memory that differs from healthy aging adults. The recommended criteria for MCI is self and/or informant report of memory impairment and/or evidence of decline over time on objective tasks with preserved activities of daily living, and minimal impairment in complex instrumental functions with no diagnosis of dementia (19). Resulting from the research on MCI the Diagnostic Statistical Manual-5 (DSM-5) included a category of neurocognitive disorder and distinguishes between mild (mNCD) and major (mNCD) neurocognitive disorders to describe the heterogeneity

J Nutr Health Aging

these articles were reviewed in-depth to determine validity and reliability of the cognitive frailty measures.

Data extraction, was used to identify the psychometric properties based on the measurements provided in the article or if the criteria could be found in the original longitudinal study as referenced by the author. The level of evidence was appraised for each study using the Center for Evidence Based Medicine Levels of Evidence (23). Studies were evaluated with a systematic approach and rated based on their strength of evidence. The operational definitions for both frailty and cognition were reported separately to highlight the combination of tools being used to study the relationship between physical frailty and cognition and report on measurement properties and significant findings. A framework, presented in Table 1, was developed to report the operational definition criteria being used for cognitive frailty based on impairment in the physiological domains defined by The Interventions on Frailty Working Group: mobility, balance, muscle strength, motor processing, nutrition (often operationalized as nutritional status or weight change/sarcopenia), cognition, endurance (including feelings of fatigue and exhaustion), and physical activity (24). Cognition was further defined in the framework based on the use of neuropsychiatric testing and/or a clinical cognitive assessment tool (i.e. MMSE or CDR) in the operational definition. To accompany these results, and to help with replication of the work, the search strategy and data extraction results have been made available online.

Results

The association between phsycial frailty and cognitive decline was established in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies before the International Consensus Group (I.A.N.A/ I.A.G.G) proposed the definition of cognitive frailty in 2013 (25). Additionally, evidence presented in this review supports the link between physical frailty and cognitive decline with developing validity to support distinct relationships between components of physical frailty and cognition in communitydwelling older adults. Table 2 presents a comparison of the screening tools used by the ten studies included in this review and those proposed by the International Consensus Group (I.A.N.A/I.A.G.G) as a framework for evaluating the development and validation of an operational definition for cognitive frailty.

None of the researchers explicity described using a theoretical framework; however, all the studies discussed components of cognitive frailty in relation to the International Consensus Group's (I.A.N.A/I.A.G.G) proposed definition. All 11 studies examined the correlation of physical frailty and cognitive impairment. Additionally, six studies examined rate of change in frailty scores in associaton to rate of deterioration of cognitive scores. Participants were non-demented at baseline in all but two studies, including baseline amnestic Mild Cognitive Impairment (aMCI) and a probable/possible diagnosis of dementia (26, 27). Although several studies reported baseline cognitive status, scores were not always considered in the statistical model. This finding may be important because baseline cognition can decrease the association between frailty and all dementia outcomes; association between frailty and dementia was stronger with higher baseline scores (HR 1.78, 95% CI 1.14-2.78) than those with lower baseline cognitive scores (HR 0.79, 95% CI 0.50-1.26 p value for interaction = 0.02) (28).

Cross-sectional studies

Six cross-sectional studies examined the association of frailty and cognitive decline using a modified CHS criterion (5). Functional status evaluations were added in several studies (26, 29, 30) and co-morbidies, age, gender, BMI, and depression were often considered in the covariate analysis $(26, 27, 31)$. The cross-sectional studies relied on clinincal evaluations including MMSE, executive tests, gait speed, grip strength, weight loss, and psychological markers (Table 2). Few of the studies used biomarkers, and only one used imaging in the operational definition (30).

Cohort study

One cohort study examined the associations between frailty and cognitive decline over 12 months (32). The study used

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Table 1 Operational Definitions of Cognitive Frailty

*Rolfson et al. (2013) used 3 operational definitions: CHS, Edmonton Frail Scale, and Frailty Index; ¥ Clinical Cognitive Assessment Tool was defined as use of any of the following:
MMSE, MoCA, CDR, ADAS-Cog or CASI

the CHS criterion (5) with the addition of a functional status evaluation and tested the MMSE and Clinical Dementia Rating Scale (CDR). The study did not control for chronic diseases or depression. Additionally total sample size (n=182) was small, affecting power for individual classifications of frailty (nonfrail $n=43$, pre-frail $n=104$, frail $n=35$ (30).

Longitudinal studies

Results from four longitudinal studies were published after 2013. A modified CHS criterion (5) was used in three of the studies. One study used more than one frailty instrument to determine if the relationship between neurocogntive speed (NCS) and frailty was affected by how frailty was operationalized (33). The use of biomarkers, clinical markers, and imaging varied among studies. The use of biomarkers and imaging was more commonly used in the longitudinal studies than cohort and cross-sectional studies (Table 2). Functional status evaluation was added in one study (34) and co-morbidities were considered in the analysis for all of the studies.

Validity

For all the studies in this review, criterion validity was examined for performance of the operationalization of various cogntive frailty measurements. Predictive and discriminant validity was commonly reported as odds ratio (OR) or hazard ratio (HR); two studies used Pearson correlations and multiple linear regression models to establish associations between components of physical frailty and cognitive function. Predictive validity was established by investigating frailty and rate of change in cognition or correlation of frailty and cognitive decline. Discriminant validity was established by analyzing the relationship between measures of frailty (frail, pre-frail, and robust) and type of demenia (MCI, clinically diagnosed dementia, vascular dementia, and Alzheimer's) (26, 28, 30, 32). All of the studies evaluated community-dwelling older adults for which the CHS frailty measures are validated (5). Only one study compared more than one operational defintion of frailty: CHS, FI, and EFS (33). Heterogeneity was present in the objective measures, and the terminology-specific language for the components of the CHS frailty construct often varied from the validated CHS criteria (5).

J Nutr Health Aging

ASSESSING THE CURRENT STATE OF COGNITIVE FRAILTY: MEASUREMENT PROPERTIES

Heterogeneity was present in the objective measures for cognitive assessment and neuropsychiatric testing. Two studies assessed global cognition with the MMSE (30, 34), four used the MMSE and domain specific neuropsychiatric testing (26, 29, 32, 33), three used only domain neuropsychiatric testing $(27, 28, 35)$, and one assessed global cognition with both the MMSE and MoCA with domain specific neuropsychiatric testing (36). The Cognitive Dementia Rating scale (CDR) had no predictive validity with evidence of no difference between frailty and cognition (relative risk = 2.1; $p = 0.393$) (32). The National Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology-Functional Assessment tool (NCGG-FAT) had good test-retest reliability with moderate to high external validity (Person $r = 0.496$ to 0.842). The MMSE continues to be the most commonly used clinical cognitive assessment tool for operationalizing cognitive frailty (25); concurrent validity (Pearson $r = 0.776$; $p < 0.001$) and reliability test-retest (Person $r = 0.827$; $p = 0.001$) (37) with neuropsychiatric testing predictive and discriminate validity is established by the rate of change in MMSE and CHS frailty criterion (32).

Predictive validity was established in four main areas: 1) frailty and type of dementia: MCI (OR 2.0; $p = \langle 0.001 \rangle$) and (OR 7.4, 95% CI 4.2-13.2) (29, 30); vascular dementia (OR 6.7, 95% CI 1.6-27.4) and (HR 2.68, 95% CI 1.16-7.17) (30, 34); and Alzheimer's dementia (OR 3.2, 95% CI 1.7-6.2), (HR 1.08, 95% CI 0.74-1.57), and (HR 0.62, 95% CI 0.20-1.89) (28, 30, 34). The relationship between frailty and vascular dementia (VaAD) is further supported by the rate of change in frailty x macroinfarcts ($r = 0.032$, $p < 0.001$) (35). Evidence of convergent validity exists between dementia and non-dementia types with findings to support the associations between frailty and non-Alzheimer's dementia (OR 2.57, 95% CI 1.08-6.11).

2) Frailty and the individual domains of cognitive function was identified by evaluating the relationship of neurocognitive speed and change in cognition using regression coefficients (33) and evaluation of the MMSE subdomains. Individual domains of cognitive function were found to be gender specific (31). Predictive validity was dependent on the frailty operational definition; Frailty Index (FI) and NCS (OR 0.87, 95% CI 0.81-0.95) compaired to the modified CHS and EFS which found no correlation with neurocognitive speed (33).

3) Individual components of frailty and individual domains of cognitive function associations inculded slow gait and executive function (β -0.20), attention (β -0.25), processing speed (β -0.16) (36), word recall (β -.0.18, p = 0.02), and logical memory ($\beta = 0.04$, p = 0.04) (27). Weak grip was predictive for changes in executive function (β – 0.16, p $=0.008$ (27). Physical activity was associated with changes in executive function (β = -0.18, p= 0.02) and word recall (β = 0.17 , p= 0.02) (27).

4) Individual components of frailty and global cognitive function were found in several studies (27, 28, 34-36). Individual components included grip strength ($r = -0.51$, $p <$ 0.001), gait speed ($r = -0.067$, $p < 0.001$) (35), and exhaustion

 $(\beta - 0.18)$ (36) were predictive for changes in global cognition. Psychological markers were frequently used for the assessment of endurance, fatigue, or depression. However, variability existed in the type of assessment scale used and how the psychological marker was operationalized. Psychological markers were typically used to either assess endurance for fatigue in the CHS criteria (29, 35) or considered as a covariate in the statistical analysis (27, 28, 32, 34). Variability in the psychological markers can be seen in Table 2 and online material.

Reliability

Due to the heterogeneity in the objective measures for frailty, reliability was not consistently examined for cognitive frailty. The limited reliability and variability in the operational measurements used for the CHS frailty criteria add challenges to establishing an operational definition for cognitive frailty. Motor performance was the only measurement for which validity and reliability was established (34).

Feasability

Instrumental assessments for cognitive frailty are currently time-consuming, expensive, require extensive training, and the clinical translation properties are not clear. The addition of biomarkers and imaging potentiates the complexity of the feasability for measures and complicates the process for detection of cognitive frailty in the clinical setting.

Discussion

The findings from this review continue to support evidence for the association between physical frailty and cognitive decline. However, while cross-sectional studies have detected a relationship, further studies are needed to determine causal pathways (38). Studies continue to use different combinations of measurement instruments for cognitive frailty, but are measuring similar domains of physical frailty and cognition. Based on the findings in this review the CHF criteria with measures of mobility/gait speed, strength, nutrition/weight loss, endurance/fatigue, and physical activity, neuropsychiatric testing and a cognitive assessment tool was the most common operational definition (Table 1). Further testing of the cognitive frailty construct should attempt to provide validity and reliability for objective measures and scales which are based on self-report. Self-report scales must prove to be stable over time (test-retest reliability), and those administered by several individuals need to exhibit good inter-rater reliability. Additionally, inclusion of a theoretical framework will provide a structure for generating cumulative knowledge on which interventions can be based.

Studies are starting to deconstruct the relationship between the components of physical frailty and cognitive decline. Unravelling of the complex cognitive frailty construct will refine the operational definition and improve an

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ASSESSING THE CURRENT STATE OF COGNITIVE FRAILTY: MEASUREMENT PROPERTIES

understanding of the clinical distinction between cognitive impairment due to physical frailty and an isolated neurological condition. Disentangling the association between frailty and cognitive decline requires the use of convergent validity to determine if the cognitive frailty construct is able to distinguish among between different types of dementia (e.g., Vascular, Alzheimer's, Lewy Body, and Parkinson's dementia) (27). The association of cognitive decline and frailty may be responsible for part of the heterogeneity in the presentation of dementia. Movement toward evaluating specfic domains of cognitive impairment such as executive functioning and psychomotor speed versus a global assessment of dementia will facilitate an understanding of the implications for cogintive frailty. However, the current lack of validity and reliability of a cognitive frailty operational definition means that it is not possible to recommend translation of measures to detect the presence of risk factors that may predict cognitive frailty in the clinical settings.

A limitation of this review was the exclusion of studies that did not address the cognitive frailty construct. In the future, a review of the literature focused on individual physical function measures may identify other markers associated with cognitive impairment. Further research with epidemiological and population based studies that includes diverse ethnic and social economic groups will help establish a better understanding of the prevalence of cognitive frailty. The majority of studies in this review either did not report ethnicity or the sample included a high proportion of white (88%-99%) females (58%-80%). Only two studies provided a population-based estimate of cognitive frailty with samples of 5,104 Japanese (29) and 4,649 Irish community-dwelling older adults (36). Understanding how demographics effect the measurement of cognitive frailty are important since psychometric tools may be effected by populations which have higher rates frailty, comorbidity, cardiovascular disease, poorer health, decreased access to care, and low education and income (5). Inclusion of chronic diseases, such as depression and cardiovascular disease, as a part of the study design is an important part of describing other factors that may contribute to cognitive frailty over time. Additionally, adjustment for the presence of apolipoprotein (APOE) ϵ 4 alleles and other biomarkers (e.g. inflammatory makers, beta-amyloid protein) could help describe the pathophysiological mechanisms.

The early detection of cognitive decline emphasizes a promising focus for the development of preventive and therapeutic interventions. Current studies suggest the importance in understanding both constructs separately as a way to deconstruct dissociable components, describe common pathologies, and develop a single operational definition which would allow for targeted interventions. Ensuring validity and reliability in the measures used is paramount if providers are to identify individuals at risk for pathological non-normal aging changes and develop interventions to improve the quality of life of older adults. Further research is needed to establish an operational definition for cognitive frailty, develop a better

understanding of the directional relationship between physical frailty and cognitive impairment, gender differences, and identify biomarkers to assist with detection of diagnosis and disease progression.

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Ethical Standards: To reduce bias in this rigorous review the authors adhered to the Whittemkore & Knafl., 2005 and PRISMA guidelines. This study did not use human subjects.

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MANUSCRIPT 2:

Determining Biological Factors for Cognitive Frailty: A Systematic Review

Abstract: On April 16th, 2013 the International Consensus Group (I.A.N.A/I.A.G.G) formally defined the novel phenotype cognitive frailty; a condition characterized by the co-occurrence of physical frailty and cognitive impairment. We hypothesize that there are biological factors to describe the interconnection between physical frailty and cognitive impairment. This systematic review focuses on identifying the shared measurable biological and genomic mechanisms for physical frailty and cognitive decline. Two independent reviewers assessed the eligibility of each report based on predefined inclusion criteria to ensure interrater reliability; a third reviewer resolved conflicting assessments. The review was conducted using PubMed, Embase, Scopus, Web of Science, LILACS, Gene Indexer, and GWAS Central. Findings resulted in 1232 abstracts for full review, 327 articles were included in the final review. Data extraction identified a correlation between 16 distinct inflammatory and protein markers with biomarker-related gene expression for cognitive frailty. Meaningful findings were identified in the relationship between protein and genetic markers found for both cognitive decline and physical frailty. This systematic review presence the first known findings of the underlying biological characteristics for cognitive frailty providing evidence for converging pathophysiological pathways.

Introduction

In the past century, scientific research has been driven by molecular science with the common goal of identifying a single group of biological or genetic mechanisms as the cause of disease. We now understand that the mechanisms underlying disease processes are multi-factorial and system based. A multi-system physiological disease requires a systems approach to precision research especially with older adults who have variable trajectories to the aging process with multiple co-morbidities. Efforts to unravel this complexity start with understanding the unique biological factors for a cluster of individuals presenting with similar symptoms and trajectories. Cognitive frailty can be considered a unique geriatric phenomenon in which we see a cluster of individuals with a condition which simultaneously presents with both physical frailty and cognitive impairment¹. The International Consensus Group organized by the International Academy on Nutrition and Aging (I.A.N.A) and the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (I.A.G.G) convened in 2013 to identify related domains of physical frailty and cognition. The new construct called "cognitive frailty" is defined by the presence of physical frailty and cognitive impairment in the absence of Alzheimer's disease or other dementias¹. The mechanisms and the directional relationship behind the dynamic association of these two constructs remains unexplained. There exists strong evidence for the association of frailty and cognitive decline with suggestion for pathophysiological mechanisms which are shared by both clinical manifestations². Although, some research has been conducted on the association between physical function and cognitive decline there is still no comprehensive list or understanding of the underlying mechanisms for cognitive frailty. Therefore, to further develop an understanding of cognitive frailty, it is critical that the operational definition explore both clinical and biological markers for cognitive decline and physical frailty.

Identification of a measurable cellular, biochemical, or molecular markers for cognitive frailty has not been identified. Because both cognitive decline and physical frailty are large heterogeneous conditions it may not be possible to identify one biomarker to measure both cognitive decline and frailty. The use of one or more biomarkers specific to both constructs will improve our understanding of the association^{3,4}. It is possible that the underlying biological mechanisms for cognitive frailty are at the intersect between cognitive decline and physical frailty or cognitive frailty may contain some of its own unique markers of disease.

Some evidence exists to support inflammatory biomarkers (neuroinflammatory cytokines) such as C-reactive protein (CRP) and Interleukin-6 (IL-6) as antecedent biomarkers since they are associated with frailty and cognitive decline^{1,3}. The complicated use of inflammatory biomarkers, such as CRP, for detection of disease is that they can be detected in other co-morbid diseases found in older adults (i.e. cardiovascular disease, rheumatologic disease). Wilson, Finch, and Cohen (2002) completed a review exploring over 30 neuroinflammatory cytokines and their findings indicate the potential for detection of cognitive decline and evidence for associated improvement of cognition with targeted interventions to reduce the production of specific neuroinflammatory cytokine markers 5 . Finally, genetic factors associated with cognitive frailty have not been fully explored. There have been several genome-wide association studies (GWAS) and candidate gene studies for cognitive decline with only more recent studies exploring the genetic mechanisms for frailty.

Methods

Search strategy

In this review, we followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines 6 . A systematic review of the literature was performed using the following online databases: PubMed, Embase, Scopus, Web of Science, LILACS, Gene Indexer, and GWAS Central. For reproducibility, we have provided the PubMed search strategy in the supplementary appendix (Figure I). Databases were searched from the start date of the database to 22 December, 2015. An update of the searches was performed prior to the data extraction phase on 26 May, 2016 to identify any new publications. In addition to database searching, articles were hand-pulled from references and identified through other sources.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Studies that included information on biomarkers or genetic markers for dementia, physical frailty, or cognitive frailty were included. Reviews, animal studies, imaging biomarkers, and case studies were excluded. Studies on a geriatric population, aged 65 and older, were included. Articles about other disease states such as cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Down syndrome, Parkinson's disease, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and Huntingdon's disease were excluded. Articles published in English were included. Study appraisals

A multi-step approach was used to evaluate relevant articles using Covidence, a webbased software platform selected by Cochrane Reviews that organizes and streamlines the systematic review process⁷. Figure I shows the stages (PRISMA) for retrieving the

studies for inclusion and extraction. We conducted a review of the titles and abstracts of all the papers identified through database searching and hand pulling from references lists. Three reviewers participated in this step and each article was reviewed by two reviewers (LS and AS) to ensure interrater reliability. A third reviewer (SH) resolved conflicting assessments. A fourth reviewer (EA) was available for additional arbitration however their services were not required. From 5942 articles identified, titles and/or abstracts reporting on information pertaining to biomarkers or genetic markers for cognitive decline, physical frailty, or cognitive frailty was included. 1232 potential relevant articles were chosen for closer review, two reviewers with appropriate subject expertise (LS and AS) assessed the full-text of the articles for relevancy. 327 full-text articles reporting on the relevant topic met inclusion/exclusion criteria and 899 articles were excluded. Reviewer disagreements were addressed in regular meetings and resolved. A final 327 articles were included in this systematic review.

Extraction

The analysis for this paper was generated using Qualtrics software, Version 9.2017 of Qualtric (Copyright \odot [2017] Qualtrics. Qualtrics and all other Qualtrics product or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of Qualtrics, Provo, UT, USA. http://www.qualtrics.com.) The survey created in Qualtrix (Qualtrics, Provo, UT) ensured consistency in reporting of biological markers limiting open text boxes, consistent categorizing of biomarkers by clinical, genetic, and fluid markers in the following categories: inflammatory/immunity, protein, metabolomics, oxidative stress. The database assigned each biomarker unique numeric code (i.e. IL6-3, CRP-27). When

data entry was complete, the final data frame was exported from Qualtrix and an analysis was carried out using R V. 3.2.1. R is free, open-source software that provides many statistical and graphic techniques. R packages used included 'MASS' and 'ggplot2'8,9.

We did not complete a formal method of assessment for the quality of the studies with a meta-analysis given that the goal of this review is to identify potential putative markers for a new phenotype "cognitive frailty". Level of evidence was appraised for longitudinal, observational (cohort, cross Sectional, case-control studies), and randomized clinical trials (RCTs) using the Center for Evidence Based Medicine Levels of Evidence¹⁰. Additionally, there are limited (RCTs) for frailty and none for cognitive frailty. We do provide a compressive list of the principle results, study design, and detail list of genetic findings correlated to one of the following phenotypes: cognitive decline, frailty, and cognitive frailty. The markers extracted for correlation to cognitive frailty were identified by the reviews to be studies that explored both frailty and cognitive decline in the same study.

Findings and discussion

A total of 327 articles were used to extract the clinical, genetic, and protein markers for three phenotypes: cognitive decline, physical frailty, and cognitive frailty. Date ranges for the studies are shown in Figure II. Studies were reviewed in the following categories 39 genetic studies: 9 GWAS and 30 candidate gene studies, 279 biological protein studies, 9 medication risk studies. Additional study designs included observational (Cohort, cross sectional, and case-control studies), longitudinal, RCT and In Vitro studies.

For the 13 studies that included both a longitudinal and observational (Cohort, cross sectional, and case-control studies) study design we extracted markers from both study designs. The studies were categorized by phenotype: cognitive decline ($n=$ 243), frailty $(n= 72)$, and cognitive frailty $(n= 11)$. Phenotypes were further defined by the type of cognitive decline (i.e. Alzheimer's disease, mild cognitive impairment) and component of frailty (i.e. gait, sarcopenia, grip strength, physical activity) as stated in the study or a combination both was considered cognitive frailty. The supplementary appendix (table I) shows the clinical and biomarkers extracted from 288 articles. Tables I-III show the biomarkers extracted by phenotype in the following categories: clinical, inflammatory/immunity, laboratory, protein, metabolomics, and oxidative stress. Additionally, a summation or frequency in which the biomarker occurred out of the 288 articles is shown by phenotype.

Clinical markers

Although, clinical markers were not a part of the search strategy several of the studies reported clinical findings associated with cognitive decline, physical frailty, and cognitive frailty. Demographics such as increasing age were a factor for all phenotypes, lower education and income were factors for individuals with cognitive decline and frailty. Other clinical markers included: measures of cardiovascular disease, elevated blood pressure, multiple co-morbidities, changes in body mass index (BMI), and alcohol intake. One of the most interesting clinical findings was an association between medications and all phenotypes. These included hypertension, benzodiazepine, anticholinergic, and psychoactive medications. Two categories of hypertensive medications beta-blockers

(i.e. metoprolol and atenolol) and angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors were found to have the most significant effect on cognitive decline^{11,12}. Additionally, there was a significant interaction between ACE inhibitor use and carriers of *ApoE4 (odds ratio:* 20.9, 95% *CI* 3.08-140.95, $p = .002$ ¹². Anticholinergic burden was found to be associated with cognitive decline and physical frailty. An interaction was found between ApoE4 carriers and anticholinergic medications with users having the lowest cognitive scores. Irrespective of *ApoE4* status, drugs with high anticholinergic properties were associated with cognitive and physical decline $11,13-16$. Methods for measuring medication burden varied significantly between studies making it difficult compare study results. Inflammatory/Immunity markers

There were 16 neuroinflammatory cytokine markers associated with cognitive decline and frailty. These included: elevated levels of IL6, CRP, tumor necrosis factor (TNFalpha), uric acid, IL1-beta, erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR),

cortisol/dehydroepiandrosterone ratio, IL1RA, CD8, IL6R, TNF-a receptor I (TNFR1), cortisol, homocysteine, fibrinogen, and beta 2-microglobulin (B2M). Additionally, all the neuroinflammatory markers associated with cognitive frailty were associated with either cognitive decline or frailty. These neuroinflammatory cytokines were found to be associated with cognitive decline and frailty in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies suggesting that these markers could be both early and persistent markers. The presence of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis hormones such as dehydroepiandrosterone can interact with inflammatory markers to influence disease.

This relationship should be explored further with clinical markers such as gender and body mass index.

Laboratory markers

Twenty laboratory markers are associated with both phenotypes and include: Nutritional markers: low levels of vitamin D, total albumin, and selenium; Cardiovascular/endocrine markers: elevated total cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL, insulin like growth factor protein (IGF-1), glucose, insulin resistance, HbA1c; Hematology/renal markers: elevated creatinine, creatinine clearance, blood urea nitrogen (BUN), white blood cells (WBC); and decreased hemoglobin, hematocrit, cobalamin deficiency (B12), and increased methylmalonic acid (MMA), and hormonal marker: low levels of total testosterone associated with decreased lean muscle mass and cognitive decline. These markers combined with endocrine and immune markers suggest changes to the cellular immune system and HPA axis that are related to cognitive and physical decline. Additionally, several studies included these markers and the inflammatory/immune markers as a composite score and found an increased risk for developing cognitive decline, frailty, and mortality $17-22$.

Protein markers

Several of the protein markers were measured by cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) and included known biomarkers associated with the neurofibrillary tangles involved in the pathogenesis of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and frontotemporal dementia²³. None of these markers (i.e. p-tau, A β eta-42) have been studied in frailty. Three markers measured by serum/plasma were associated with both
cognitive decline and frailty, these included: sirtuin 1 and cystatin C. The down regulation of Sirtuin 1 has been reported to be involved in the pathway that controls the expression of Aβeta peptide through *ADAM10*²⁴. Concentrations of sirtuin 1 decline with age but the decline was found to be more significant in individuals with cognitive decline and frailty compared to age matched healthy individuals^{24,25}. Additionally, cystatin C has been thought to bind to soluble Aßeta preventing accumulation in the brain²⁶. Decreased serum cystatin C has been associated with higher risk for cognitive decline and gait speed decline^{27,28}.

Metabolomics and oxidative stress markers

No metabolomics markers were found to be related to cognitive frailty. Two oxidative stress markers were associated, these included: malondialdehyde (MDA) and protein carbonyls. MDA and protein carbonyls are well established oxidative biomarkers and are considered to be a good measure of systemic oxidative stress²⁹. Both are associated with frailty and cognitive decline but not predictive of the development or progression of disease^{29,30}.

Genetic

The supplementary appendix table II shows a complete list of genetic markers identified by phenotype. Three genes were found to be associated with cognitive decline and frailty in candidate gene studies: *IL6* rs1800796, *TNF* rs1800629, and *COMT* with different SNPs, rs4680 for cognitive decline and rs4646316 for frailty. *IL6* and *TNF* have corresponding serum markers that are associated with both phenotypes (see inflammatory/immunity markers) $31-34$.

There are 12 serum biomarker and gene correlations, these are shown in table IV. Further evaluation is need to determine if there is a direct correlation between gene expression and serum marker function.

Conclusions

It has previously been postulated that a dysregulation across multiple systems may be the potential cause for both cognitive and physical decline^{18,19,21}. The results from this systematic review provide evidence for a biological association between cognitive decline and physical frailty. The potential in identifying a unique biomarker that is the key to a specific molecular or cellular event is enticing but considering the complexity and individual variability to aging we need to consider the possibility that these interactions are non-linear. Several studies presented here have taken various approaches to combining biomarkers using method such as allostatic load index, physiologic dysfunction scores, principle components analysis (PCA), and serum protein based algorithms (random forest methods) to yield a more accurate understanding in the relationship between biomarkers and detection of disease^{18,19,21,22}. Future research should focus approaches that could include multiple markers of disease to build an accurate model for the detection of cognitive frailty. Finding should be reproducible and validated before translating into clinical practice. Integrating multiple biomarkers has potential to help us better understand the complex physiological interactions. Such validated models for disease detection will be invaluable in the prevention and early detection of diseases unique to aging.

Figure I. PRISMA flow diagram of study selection and citation analysis 6

Figure II. Systematic review publication date range

Table I. Cognitive decline biomarkers by category and frequency

Table II. Frailty biomarkers by category and frequency

Table IV. Serum and genetic correlations by phenotype

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MANUSCRIPT 3:

Establishing Biological Plausibility for Cognitive Frailty: A Population Predictive Model Abstract:

Background: This study aims to create a population predictive model to gain a more indepth understanding of the underlying biological mechanisms for cognitive frailty as currently defined by the International Consensus Group in 2013. Methods: Data were from the InCHIANTI study, collected at baseline from 1998-2000. This group is a representative sample ($n=1,453$) of a population of white European origin from two small towns in Tuscany, Italy. To build our model, we used biomarkers with implications for clinical research and practice; a total of 132 putative SNPs and 155 protein biomarkers were identified from a systematic review (manuscript 2). We used a tree boosting model, Extreme Gradient Boosting (xgboost), a machine learning technique for supervised learning. Results: We developed two predictive models with high accuracy, AUCs for Model I is 0.877 (95% CI 0.825-0.903) and 0.864 (95% CI 0.804-0.899) for Model II. Results provide biological evidence for the relationship between cognitive decline and physical frailty supporting findings of dysregulation across multiple systems as the potential cause of cognitive frailty. One of the top predictors for cognitive frailty included anticholinergic burden with the presents of *SLCO1B1* rs4363657 (TMT-A β = .20 , TMT-B β = .38). Conclusions: The results from this study establish a foundation for an understanding of the underlying biological mechanisms for the relationship between cognitive decline and physical frailty.

Introduction

The relationship between the phenotypes physical frailty and cognitive decline has been established in epidemiological studies. Both are associated with higher rates of disability, falls, mortality, an increase in health service need, and high direct/indirect costs to healthcare from long-term care and hospitalization $^{1-6}$. Evidence exists to support a longitudinal bidirectional relationship between physical function and cognitive decline; finding that associations between physical functioning and consequent cognitive decline are similar to associations with individuals with cognitive decline and consequent physical functioning⁷. These findings support an a priori hypothesis for shared biological mechanisms that underlie the association of physical and cognitive decline.

Although physical and cognitive impairment have been shown to be related, both phenotypes have long been studied separately⁴. To address this gap, the International Consensus Group organized by the International Academy on Nutrition and Aging (I.A.N.A) and the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (I.A.G.G) convened in 2013 to identify related domains of physical frailty and cognition. The new construct called "cognitive frailty" is defined by the presence of physical frailty and cognitive impairment in the absence of Alzheimer's disease or other dementias⁴. The International Consensus Group (I.A.N.A. /I.A.G.G.) report is an acknowledgment of the need to focus research efforts on a clinical condition characterized by the occurrence of physical frailty and cognitive impairment, in the absence of overt dementia diagnosis or underlying neurological conditions⁴. The cognitive frailty construct is considered a

heterogeneous clinical syndrome in older adults with evidence of: 1) physical frailty and cognitive impairment; and 2) exclusion of a clinical diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or other dementia⁴.

The introduction of this new phenotype demonstrates evidence for cognitive frailty as a subgroup of cognitive decline and physical frailty. Genetic risk factors and biological markers may be unique to individuals who present with cognitive frailty in contrast to those with isolated cognitive or physical decline. A model for detecting cognitive frailty could provide practitioners with the tools needed for early detection and secondary prevention for individuals with cognitive frailty. Currently, the instrumental assessments for cognitive frailty are time-consuming, expensive, require extensive training, and the clinical translation of these assessments is not clear 4 . Translating the cognitive frailty construct into the clinical setting is limited by the lack of consensus on an operational definition and considerable heterogeneity in the diagnostic criteria⁸. An understanding of the biomarkers that define cognitive frailty will help distinguish between changes related to normal aging, irreversible pathological process, and specific neurological diseases that may be reversible 9 . The strength in understanding the biological underpinnings of cognitive frailty is the ability to provide early detection and accurate diagnosis.

The primary purpose of this research was to create a population predictive model to gain a more in-depth understanding of the underlying biological mechanisms for cognitive frailty as currently defined by the International Consensus Group in 2013. This paper focuses on defining the shared mechanisms for physical frailty and cognitive

impairment and establishing a model for determining the presence of risk factors that may predict cognitive frailty in the clinical setting. An important innovation in this study was the use of machine learning (ML) statistical modeling to define the differences between the following groups: cognitive decline, physical frailty and cognitive frailty. The study builds an algorithmic classifier for cognitive frailty with candidate factors identified by a systematic review (results published elsewhere). Notably, the identification of unique biomarkers may also serve to group patients by underlying pathophysiologic processes and further refine the assignment to a clinical diagnostic category. Such precision in the determination of genetic and biological biomarkers related to cognitive frailty will lead to a better understanding of the interrelated pathology between physical frailty and cognitive impairment and, ultimately, to early detection and targeted interventions focused on the prevention of cognitive and functional disabilities.

Methods

Study Population

Figure 1 shows a summary of our workflow, further details on phenotypes and the list of biomarkers are available in the supplementary appendix. Clinical, protein, and genetic biomarker samples were from participants of the InCHIANTI study, collected at baseline from 1998-2000. This group is a representative sample $(n=1,453)$ of the population of white European origin from two small towns in Tuscany, Italy. The primary aim of the InCHIANTI study to evaluate function and mobility in older community-dwelling individuals. A detailed description of the study design, data collection, and sampling

procedure are published elsewhere¹⁰. This secondary study was approved by the ethics committee at *Centre de recherché Clinique du CHUS*, project #547.

Predictive Measures

The International Consensus Group's (I.A.N.A. /I.A.G.G.) list of potential biomarkers is not meant to be complete, accurate, or exhaustive 4 . Since an exhaustive list of biomarkers is not present in the literature; we used a systematic review to identify factors associated with cognitive decline, physical frailty, and cognitive frailty based on the current operational definitions (Sargent et al., 2018). We searched the following online databases: PubMed, Embase, Scopus, Web of Science, LILACS, Gene Indexer, and GWAS Central. Databases were searched from the start date of the database to 22 December, 2015. An update of the searches was performed prior to the data extraction phase on 26 May, 2016 to identify any new publications. The systematic review resulted in 327 articles for the final synthesis, identifying 456 predictive protein and genetic biomarkers. A total of 289 variables identified from the systematic review were available in the InCHIANTI database. Variables were removed if there was $>12\%$ missing data, resulting in 132 putative SNPs and 155 protein biomarkers. To build our model, we used protein markers with implications for clinical research and practice, and completed genetic risk score estimates (i.e. the cumulative genetic risk burden estimated from SNPs of interest, or GRS) before including the individual single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in the final models. Many of the protein markers included in our model are used clinically for detection of disease; therefore we organized the results by using the clinical designation identified by clinical pathology laboratories. The categories

include inflammation/immunity, nutrient, lipid metabolism, metabolomics,

renal/electrolyte, hematology/liver, endocrine/hormones, and clinical features. Known predictive clinical features identified repeatedly in the systematic review were age, depression, gender, and level of education. Baseline diagnosis of dementia was included in the models for frailty and cognitive frailty. Additionally, systematic review identified a group of medications, specifically anticholinergic medications, as a risk for cognitive and physical decline^{11,12}. Anticholinergic burden was calculated using the Anticholinergic Cognitive Burden Scale (ACB) and examined as a predictor for all phenotypes.

Outcome Measures

Neuropsychological tests include the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) as a test of general cognition and the Trail Making Test, Part A and B (TMT). Psychomotor speed is assessed using the TMT-A, scoring based on time in seconds to completion with a score range of 0 to 300 seconds¹³. The executive functioning domain was assessed using the TMT-B (any individual scoring 300-600 seconds were included as 300) 13 . TMT, part A and B cut off scores are based off of established norms for mild neurocognitive disorders¹⁴. Normative data for time to complete the TMT tests in seconds was stratified by age and education¹⁵. Additionally, the neuropsychological profile for individuals with cognitive frailty is different from those with frailty or cognitive decline alone with recent findings of lower performance on TMT tests, scoring worse on executive and attention domains¹⁶. The CES-D self-report scale (0-60) is used to measure depressive symptoms. Reliability, validity, and factor structure have been similar across a diverse demographic

and the scale has been used extensively in epidemiologic studies for depression and physical function 17 .

Frailty measures included the number of frailty symptoms for subjects ≥ 65 years of age. Frailty as defined by the cardiovascular health study (CHS), allows for a continuous scoring system versus a nominal system because it can capture the multidimensional nature of frailty¹⁸. The InCHIANTI criteria for frailty defined unintentional weight loss as losing weight not related to diet, classified the values of body mass index, strength, walking speed and height based on all subjects \geq 65 years and used two questions of the CES-D for the definition of exhaustion.

In this study two models of cognitive frailty were developed, because conceptually the models need to cover variables of physical frailty and cognitive decline for populations seen in geriatric and primary care centers with implications for future clinical research and translation into practice. Primary care has a key role in early identification of cognitive and physical decline. The MMSE, despite known limitations for the diagnosis of dementia, has retained popularity in the primary care setting with increased use for screening and diagnosis and is recommended by the Alzheimer's Society¹⁹. Model *I* defines cognitive decline and cognitive frailty with the use of criteria from the MMSE while *Model II* defines these phenotypes with participants who have completed the MMSE with additional Trail Making Tests, Part A and B^{20-22} . In this study frailty was characterized by individuals with one or more of the frailty criteria, including pre-frail and frail as one group 1 . Cognitive frailty is defined as individuals with cognitive decline and one or more of the frailty criteria¹⁶.

Statistical Analysis

The supplementary appendix includes additional details of the statistical methods, beginning with detail about model development in the InCHIANTI dataset, which we used to train and test the initial model, internal validation, and calibration of the model. Evidence supports the use of tree boosting models using Extreme Gradient Boosting (xgboost) in R, statistical software, as an effective method for building a reproducible predictive model for the detection of a complex heterogeneous phenotype with large numbers of potential biomarkers^{23,24}. Boosted trees, a machine learning technique for supervised learning, are ensembles of regression trees, similar to decision trees and are used for prediction or classification. Xgboost is based in boosted trees and provides more efficient and accurate predictive modeling with large datasets and a rapid / robust framework for feature selection. Statistical modeling is used to design, test, and validate an accurate method for classifying patients into phenotypic outcomes.

The tree boosting model for the evaluation of multiple variables simultaneously provides a high predictive value with low bias. Additionally, parameters are set to prevent over fitting for the models. The data were randomly divided, two thirds was assigned to the training cohort, and one third was assigned to the validation cohort. One of the features that is central to xgboost is its ability to combine multiple trees or "weak predictors" to reach maximum prediction performance while reducing bias. This approach uses large amounts of data from different aspects of clinical, genetic, and biomarker research, strengthening the models' generalizability and classification power. Xgboost iteratively re-weighs the variables, taking a weighted majority; the parameters

identified after pruning comprised the final predictive model²⁵. None of the candidate features in the models are used in the diagnosis of cognitive decline, physical frailty, or cognitive frailty. This standard technique prevents circularity, overestimation, and over fitting for both the models generated. Parameters for the model include: max depth $=$ "10", nthread = "12", nrounds = 5-200, objective = "binary:logistic", evaluation metric = "auc", silent ="1", gamma = default ="0" to control the number of trees, and eta default= "0.3" to prevent over fitting. We used the default setting for all other parameters which can be found in the xgboost 0.6 documentation²⁴.

To evaluate the models, we used the evaluation metric area under the receiver operating curve (AUC). AUC were calculated from each model and used to determine discrimination of participants with cognitive frailty (case), cognitive decline (case), and physical frailty (case) from healthy individuals (control) in the training cohort. An AUC of 0.5 was considered chance, > 0.8 informative, and > 0.9 clinically relevant.

The xgboost algorithm iteratively determines the maximum function of a model based on a tree building algorithm (quadratic problem) which creates a node then assigns a prediction point to each leaf; the assigned number is termed "gain". Once the model has reached maximum depth, pruning occurs by taking out the nodes with a negative gain and keeping those with a positive gain. Results from the population predictive model are ranked by gain which is a metric based on each feature's contribution in the model. When comparing top features to other features in the model, the higher the gain the more important the feature is for prediction of the outcome. Cover is a measure of the relative quantity of observations found by one feature and frequency is the percentage

representing the relative number of time a feature is used in the trees of the model²⁴. Gain is the most relevant metric to interpreting the rank and importance of each feature.

A case-control design is used to study genome wide variations between participants with cognitive frailty (case) and those with only cognitive decline (control), only physical frailty (control), and healthy individuals (control). Univariate analysis, *t*-tests for continuous and chi-squared tests for binomial traits, were used to determine the significance of the predictor. We used logistic regression for case-control analyses under additive allele dosage. To evaluate additive effects of SNPs, a positive regression coefficient means that each copy of the allele of interest increases the risk for the cognitive frailty phenotype^{26,27}. The appendix includes further details and results about the generation of the genetic data and creation of the GRS from 132 genetic risk factors implicated in one or more studies from the systematic review. Our study used the highperformance computational capabilities of the Biowulf Linux cluster at the National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, MD, USA) in the and genotypic data from the InCHIANTI study.

The final models identified features that were predictive of cognitive frailty with unique features for cognitive decline and physical frailty. Mechanisms that contribute to the development of cognitive frailty were determined by evaluation of fluid biomarkers and genome wide genetic variability as a predictor of the development and persistence of cognitive frailty.

Figure 1. Study approach workflow diagram

Note: Profile of model development and validation workflow. Blue boxes indicate steps of the workflow specific to the InCHIANTI data set.

Results

A total of 1,453 adults participated, 1,326 provided blood samples at baseline.

Participants had a mean age of 69 years (S.D.=15.7), 56% were female and 44% were

male, and completed a secondary level of education. All participants completed the

MMSE, 369 participants scored \leq 23 (*M*=25, S.D.=5.1), 525 scored \geq 78 on the TMT-A

 $(n=1,240)$, and 634 scored ≥ 106 on the TMT-B (n=1,057).

The supplementary appendix (tables IV-IX) contains the tables for final predictive model features ranked by gain. The results show predictive features for cognitive frailty when measured using the MMSE (Model 1) and TMT part A and B (Model II) with unique features for cognitive decline and physical frailty in both models. Bivariate results for clinical, genomic, and protein biomarkers are shown in the appendix (tables $X - XVIII$).

For discrimination of participants with cognitive frailty from healthy controls, the AUC of Model I is 0.877 (95% CI 0.825-0.903) and 0.864 (95% CI 0.804-0.899) for Model II. Parameter estimates for each predictive factor and associated descriptive statistics were evaluated to provide biological insight into the underpinnings of the classification algorithm. Next, we carried out calibration tests for all possible values between 5-200 groups and evaluated the distribution of the test statistics per subgrouping. We noted a normal distribution of AUCs across all iterations, with no statistically significant deviation from the expected values in any group, suggesting good model fit. Both models showed high accuracy with AUCs ranging from 0.808-0.877 for model I and 0.831-0.864 model II within the framework of the calibration tests.

Demographic features and anticholinergic burden results are shown in Table 5-6 and significant differences between healthy control and phenotype are shown in Table 10 of the supplementary appendix. Gender was a predictor for all three phenotypes in Model I but not a predictor in Model II. There were more females than males with cognitive decline for all three phenotypes in both models. Baseline diagnosis of dementia, while found to be a predictor in Model I for frailty and cognitive frailty was not a predictor in Model II. Anticholinergic burden (ACB) was a predictor for all three phenotypes in both models with larger ACB mean scores for those with cognitive decline, frailty, and cognitive frailty. In Model II, anticholinergic burden had a significant effect on both psychomotor speed (TMT-A) and executive functioning (TMT-B) for all three phenotypes. Anticholinergic burden was found to be one of the top predictors for all phenotypes in model I and II. Detailed analyses for anticholinergic burden are described

elsewhere and included in the results tables of this manuscript (Sargent et al., 2018 in manuscript 4).

Genomic results

Table 1 and 2 shows the comparison of genomic features by phenotype for Model I and Model II respectively.

Model I

Ten genes were predictive of cognitive frailty measured by the MMSE and CHS criteria; four genes are unique to cognitive frailty: $(BIN1)$ rs7561528 allele A (β = -.04), *ACE* rs4968782 allele G (β = .10), and *WTAPP1* rs603050 allele G (β = -.14), *MTRR* rs1801394 allele G (β = .80) and six overlap with features associated with cognitive decline and frailty: *IL6* rs1800796 allele C (β = .25), (*ACOT11*) rs12752888 allele C (β = -.47), *DAB1* rs1539053 allele A (β = .51), (*MMP3*) rs948399 allele C (β = .41), *CD33* rs3865444 allele A $(\beta = .62)$, and *UBR5* rs7840202 allele C $(\beta = .15)$. Of these markers five showed a significant difference between control and cognitive frailty: $(ACOT11)$ rs12752888 (p = .001), *DAB1* rs1539053 (p = .01), (*MMP3*) rs948399 (p = .01), *CD33* rs3865444 (p = .03), and *MTRR* rs1801394 (p = .001).

Four SNPs were uniquely associated with frailty: *CNTN5* rs10501927 allele G (β = -.10), *WTAPP1* rs11225434 allele C (β = .10), *SORL1* rs4935774 allele C (β = .04), and *CREBBP* rs129968 allele A (β = .10) Eight SNPs are unique to cognitive decline *BTRC* rs10883631 allele G (β = .11), *TOMM40* rs2075650 allele G (β = .10), *IL6R* rs2228145 allele C (β = -.31), *USP50* rs3131609 allele C (β = .10), *COMT* rs4646316 allele T (β = -.62), *AP2A2* rs7396366 allele C (β = .10), *KLOTHO* rs9527025 allele C (β = .20).

Model II

Individual variants were predictive for psychomotor speed (TMT-A) and executive functioning domain (TMT-B). Significant differences between control and disease are shown in appendix (tables XVI - XVIII).

Twenty-one genes were predictive of cognitive frailty measured by TMT and CHS criteria in model II; eight are unique to cognitive frailty *ACE* rs4316 allele T (TMT-A β = -.07, TMT-B β = -.06), *ACE* rs1800764 allele C (TMT-A β = .06, TMT-B β = .06), *EPHA1* rs11771145 allele A (TMT-A β = -.10, TMT-B β = .13), *CREBBP* rs129968 allele A (TMT-A β = .05, TMT-B β = .03), *TNF* rs1800629 allele A (TMT-A β = .15, TMT-B β = .10), *IL18* rs360722 allele A (TMT-A β = .05, TMT-B β = -.02), WTAPP1 rs603050 allele T (TMT-A β = -.21, TMT-B β = -.10), and SELP rs6131 allele T (TMT-A β = -.07, TMT-B β = -.03).

Thirteen of the cognitive frailty genetic features overlap with variants from cognitive decline and frailty: (*MMP3*) rs948399 allele C (TMT-A β = .29, TMT-B β = 0.02), (*ACOT11*) rs12752888 allele C (TMT-A β = -.34, TMT-B β = -.37), *APOE* rs429358 allele C (TMT-A β $=$ -.23,TMT-B β = -.59), *SLCO1B1* rs4363657 allele C (TMT-A β = .20 ,TMT-B β = .38), *TOMM40* rs8106922 allele G (TMT-A β = -.31, TMT-B β = .09), *CNTN5* rs10501927 allele G (TMT-A β = -.11, TMT-B β = -.06), *SORL1* rs1614735 allele G (TMT-A β = .02, TMT-B β = .07), *IL1-beta* rs16944 allele A (TMT-A β = -.01, TMT-B β = -.13), *ACE* rs4343 allele A (TMT-A β = -.02, TMT-B β = -.02), (*SSB*) rs11894266 allele C (TMT-A β = -.05, TMT-B β = -.06), *UBR5* rs7840202 allele C (TMT-A β = -.06, TMT-B β = -.05), *MAPT* rs3785880 allele G (TMT-A β = -.06, TMT-B β = -.05), *BTRC* rs10883631 allele G (TMT-A β = -.01, TMT-B β = .01).

Of these markers five showed a significant difference between control and cognitive frailty for psychomotor speed or executive functioning: (*ACOT11*) rs12752888 allele C (TMT-A, $p = .01$, TMT-B $p = .02$), *APOE* rs429358 allele C (TMT-B, $p = .01$), *SLCO1B1* rs4363657 allele C (TMT-B, p= .02), *TOMM40* rs8106922 allele G (TMT-A, p = .05), (*MMP3*) rs948399 allele C (TMT-A, p = .05).

Frailty has one unique SNP: *NECTIN2* rs6859 allele A (TMT-A β = -.02, TMT-B β = -0.07). and cognitive decline has eleven unique SNPs: *KCNU1* rs1157242 allele T (TMT-A β $= .13$, TMT-B $\beta = .44$), *SORL1* rs1133174 allele A (TMT-A $\beta = .05$, TMT-B $\beta = .02$), *KLOTHO* rs1207568 allele A (TMT-A β = -.05, TMT-B β = -.18), *GCKR* rs1260326 allele C (TMT-A β = .02, TMT-B β = .08), *COMT* rs4680 allele A (TMT-A β = -.02, TMT-B β = .06), *SORL1* rs4935774 allele C (TMT-A β = .11, TMT-B β = .05), *ATM* rs611646 allele T (TMT-A β = .08, TMT-B β = .04), *MS4A4E* rs676309 allele C (TMT-A β = -.07, TMT-B β = -.17), *SLC2A9* rs737267 allele T (TMT-A β = .10, TMT-B β = -.08), *TCN2* rs740234 allele G (TMT-A β = -.02, TMT-B β = -.10), (*BIN1*) rs744373 allele G (TMT-A β = .01, TMT-B β = -15). Cognitive decline and frailty have three shared SNPs that were not features for cognitive frailty *PRNP* rs1799990 allele G (TMT-A β = .45, TMT-B β = .30), *CR1* rs3818361 allele A (TMT-A β = .20, TMT-B β = .14), and *ABCA7* rs4147929 allele A (TMT-A β = .02, TMT-B β = .03). Protein biomarker results

Tables III and IV shows a comparison of the protein markers by category and phenotype. Significant differences between control and cognitive frailty are shown in the supplementary appendix (Tables XI-XVIII). The results show a mean difference in the laboratory value between healthy controls and those with cognitive decline, physical

frailty, and cognitive frailty. In Model I and Model II, all phenotypes share features in all categories and each phenotype has unique features. Cognitive frailty in Model I has seven unique features transforming growth factor B1 and fatty acid 22:0 with a mean increase in cystatin C (p <0.0001), decrease serum calcium (p= .0004), increase serum creatinine ($p = .02$), increase urine nitrites ($p = .02$), increase soluble transferrin receptor $(p= .01)$ for individuals with cognitive frailty compared to healthy controls. Cognitive frailty (Model I) shared 70 of the 91 features with frailty and 53 of the 93 protein fluid biomarkers features with cognitive decline. Cognitive frailty in Model II had only two unique features; urine glucose and serum IGF binding protein; IGF binding protein is decreased in individuals with cognitive frailty for psychomotor speed (p= $.0001$) and executive functioning $(p= .0004)$. Cognitive frailty (Model 2) shared 70 of the 90 features with frailty and 82 of the 125 protein fluid biomarkers features with cognitive decline. **Discussion**

In this study, we developed two models using xgboost for the prediction of cognitive frailty and further defined the association between cognitive decline and frailty. Both models have a larger population of women with older age being associated with cognitive frailty. Anticholinergic burden was highly predictive of cognitive frailty and is found as a unique predictive feature of frailty and cognitive decline in both models.

Genomic results suggest that Model I and Model II are measuring different variants. Model I has unique genomic features *DAB1* rs1539053 allele A, *CD33* rs3865444 allele A, and *MTRR* rs1801394 allele G, as predictive of cognitive frailty. *CD33* has putative functions in the immune system involved in processes at the cell membrane with links

to greater cell surface expression of monocytes and is considered an Alzheimer's disease susceptibility loci²⁸. *DAB1* is required for the organization of multiple neuronal types in the cerebral cortex and is important for normal cognitive function^{29,30}. *MTRR* rs1801394 is a marker for vitamin B12 in a pathway with methylmalonic acid (MMA) levels³¹. Lower serum MMA leads to higher serum lipids and higher homocysteine levels potentially leading to reduced energy metabolism 31 . All three of these protein markers were found in the cognitive frailty model I. Additionally, *MTRR* has been linked to 2-4 times greater odd of being frail.

One of the interesting genomic findings was *SLCO1B1* rs4363657 allele C that is predictive of frailly and cognitive frailty in Model II. The *SLCO1B1* has been associated with X12063 which is a metabolite, both are associated as markers of lean muscle mass loss³². Additionally, *SLOCO1B1* has been linked to drug metabolism specifically, higher blood concentrations of statins³³. *SLOCO1B1* is essential for the hepatic uptake and the C variant is associated with reduced *OATP1B1* activity. *OATP1B1* can facilitate drug uptake and at the blood-brain barrier may affect the distribution of drugs into the central nervous system³⁴. The association with anticholinergic metabolism and SLOCO1B1 has not been explored. Variants in model I and II included *MMP3* and (ACOT11). MMP3 rs948399 allele C is predictive of frailty and cognitive decline and (ACOT11), rs12752888 allele C is a member of the acyl-CoA thioesterase family that catalyzes the conversion of activated fatty acids³⁵. In this study (*ACOT11*) rs12752888 allele C was found to have a protective effect. (*ACOT11*) rs12752888 has not been studied in individuals with physical frailty or cognitive frailty previously.

Protein marker results show a relationship between neuroinflammatory cytokines and cognitive frailty. Neuroinflammatory cytokines (nonantibody proteins) have a role in the neuroimmunoendocrine processes and have been postulated to be related to cognition due to their ability to penetrate the blood-brain barrier and affect the central nervous system 1 . This study found elevated levels of neuroinflammatory cytokines with interleukins IL1, IL6, IL6R, and tumor necrosis factors (TNF) as predictive features for cognitive frailty in both models along with associated genetic markers: IL6 rs1800796, IL6R rs2228145, *TNF* rs1800629, and IL1-beta rs16944. Additionally, participants with cognitive frailty had higher levels of resistin ($p < .0001$) compared to controls in both models; resistin regulates IL-6, TNF, and hs-CRP². Both fibrinogen and advanced glycation end product (AGE) ($p < .0001$) were both found to be elevated showing a link to oxidative stress and high levels of alpha-2 globulin (A2M) ($p < .0001$). A2M is considered a protease inhibitor cytokine transporter linked to Alzheimer's disease was found in participants with cognitive frailty 3 . Several studies have shown a relationship between many of these neuroinflammatory markers and cognitive and physical decline^{5,6}. In this study, we found many of these markers to be predictive for both cognitive decline and physical frailty. Additionally, these patterns of neuroinflammatory cytokines have been found in the InCHIANTI study to be associated with other complex chronic disease highlighting comorbidity as a cofounding factor 4 .

Dehydroephiandrosterone sulfate (DHEA) was found to be low for those with cognitive frailty when compared to control (p<0.001). DHEA has been found to inhibit IL-6 providing a connection between endocrine and immune function. Another interesting

finding is the connection between nutrition and cognitive frailty with low fatty acid levels and high levels of c- terminal telopeptide of type-1 collagen I (PINP) and parathyroid hormone (PTH). Both PINP and PTH have been linked to low levels of vitamin D which was a finding in this study for participants with cognitive frailty⁷. Methlymalonic acid (MMA) is linked to vitamin B12 and high levels of homocysteine found in both models (p <.0001) in addition, *MTRR* rs1801394 is associated with the same pathway. Serum MMA has been link to both cognitive performance and increased risk for frailty 8,9 .

Metabolomic (ceramides C16:0, C20:0, C20:5, C22:0, C24:0) markers were found in both models, some markers were found to be elevated and others low for participants with cognitive frailty. Since this study evaluated individuals with early cognitive decline at a single time point it is possible that serum ceramides varied according to the timing and onset of memory impairment and need to be explored further 10,11 .

Cognitive frailty model I ($n=101$) and II $n=110$) feature comparison show a difference some biomarkers however, there were 66 shared biomarkers; 58 protein, 4 genomic, and 4 clinical markers. Some differences in the model features suggest lack of concordance between the clinical measures MMSE and TMT part A and B. These observations highlight the fact that pathways between clinical decision tools and precision science are not strictly linear in nature. When comparing models I and II for all phenotypes less variability with fewer unique features and more shared mechanisms.

There are several potential genomic and protein biomarker interactions, which are not fully explored in this manuscript. We did not attempt to complete a comprehensive

pathway analysis for the variables in the predictive models. The exploratory nature of this work will encourage new research into understanding these pathways. The study included a small homogenous sample with large numbers of biomarkers creating limitations for translation into clinical research. Additionally, the study was retrospective using existing data. Future research should be directed towards understanding the potentially reversible cause of cognitive frailty, validating the models in epidemiological data with more diverse demographic groups, and exploring the predictive features in prospective studies.

Conclusion

The results from this study support the use of an innovative Boosted trees machine learning technique in developing a population based predictive model for a complex condition of aging, cognitive frailty. Results provide biological evidence for the relationship between cognitive decline and physical frailty supporting findings of dysregulation across multiple systems as the potential cause of cognitive frailty. The results from this study begin to unravel the complex biological network behind the association between cognitive decline and physical frailty.

Table I. Genomic features by phenotype model I

Note: bold text indicates the closes gene

Table II. Genomic features by phenotype model II

Note: bold text indicates the closes gene

Table IV. Protein and clinical marker features by phenotype model II

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MANUSCRIPT 4:

Anticholinergic Burden is a Predictor of Cognitive Decline, Physical Frailty and Cognitive Frailty

Abstract:

OBJECTIVES: To investigate whether anticholinergic burden scores are associated with three phenotypes; cognitive decline, physical frailty and cognitive frailty.

DESIGN: Retrospective cohort study.

SETTING: InCHIANTI study, Chianti geographic area of Tuscany, Italy.

PARTICPANTS: Population of 1,453 adults aged 20-102 years.

MEASUREMENTS: Anticholinergic burden was calculated using the Anticholinergic Cognitive Burden Scale (ACB); neuropsychological tests included the Mini-Mental Status Examination and Trail Making Test A and B (TMT); frailty is defined by the Cardiovascular Heart Study, and cognitive frailty is defined by the International Consensus Group (I.A.N.A/ I.A.G.G). Anticholinergic burden was examined as a predictor for all phenotypes using logistic and ordinal regression models adjusting for covariates. RESULTS: Anticholinergic burden is associated with cognitive decline, frailty, and cognitive frailty. The odds of having cognitive decline increased by 1.21 points (95% CI = 1.06-1.37, p< .001), the odds of being frail increased by 1.33 (95% CI = 1.18-1.50, p< .001), and the odds of cognitive frailty increased by 1.36 (95% CI = 1.21-1.54, p< .001). Population modeling results indicated the ACB score as one of the stronger predictors for cognitive decline, physical frailty and cognitive frailty with areas under the receiver operating curve of 0.88 and 0.86 respectively. Anticholinergic burden association with cognitive decline as measured by TMT adjusted for covariates was not significant; in

contrast the relationships of ACB with cognitive frailty measured by the TMT-A and TMT-B were statistically significant (both p < .001).

CONCLUSION: Our data support a relationship between anticholinergic burden and cognitive decline, further strengthen the association with physical frailty and provide new evidence for an association with cognitive frailty.

Key words: anticholinergic; burden; frailty; cognition; cognitive frailty, xgboost models **INTRODUCTION**

The burden of multiple diseases perpetuates the increased consumption of medications. Older adults are especially susceptible to polypharmacy and medication adverse risks due to declines in physiological reserve, reduced liver and kidney function required to metabolize medications and increased central nervous system sensitivity to medications¹. A decline in physiologic reserve coupled with the use of anticholinergic medicines increases the risk for impaired functional and cognitive performance²⁻⁵. Anticholinergic medications block the neurotransmitter acetylcholine in the central and peripheral nervous system, selectively blocking acetylcholine from binding to the muscarinic receptors in the brain^{6,7}. Additionally, there is growing evidence that anticholinergic affect older adults in greater proportion due to the ability of these medications to permeate the blood-brain barrier $2,8$. Anticholinergic burden is considered to be the cumulative effect on an individual taking one or more medications with anticholinergic activity confounded by age-related pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic changes^{1,5,6}. Higher anticholinergic burden can occur with specific medications known to have high anticholinergic activity or with an accumulation of

medications with low, medium, and high anticholinergic burden $9,10$. An increase in circulating anticholinergic activity causes inhibition of acetylcholine transmission to the central nervous system suggesting a cholinergic deficit that is hypothesized to be involved in causing impaired cognitive and motor function 11 . There are substantial differences in methods for measuring anticholinergic burden and no standard or consensus on how to quantify burden. Systematic reviews on the current anticholinergic burden scales have all shown an association between higher anticholinergic burden and adverse outcomes; cohort studies have mainly focused on cognitive and physical outcomes^{5,9}.

Less understood is the effect anticholinergic burden has on physical frailty⁵. Although there is evidence to support the relationship between physical function and higher anticholinergic burden, the methods for measuring physical functioning have focused on activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) without controlling for confounding health factors contributing to the outcome^{5,9}. Changes in ADLs and IDLs can be affected by multiple psychosocial and physiological factors that are not a direct measure of disease. A recent study found a significant association of anticholinergic burden with gait and impaired balance measured by the timed-up and go(TUG), functional reach(FR), and grip strength(GS) assessments¹². Frailty as defined by the Cardiovascular Heart Study (CHS) is a disease process and a non-normal process of aging¹³. The CHS frailty phenotype includes decline in lean body mass, strength, endurance, balance, walking performance, and low activity¹³. Additionally, there is growing evidence for a shared relationship between cognitive decline and physical

frailty^{14–16}. The International Consensus Group organized by the International Academy on Nutrition and Aging (I.A.N.A) and the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (I.A.G.G) which convened in 2013 to identify related domains of physical frailty and cognition, termed this relationship as "cognitive frailty"¹⁵.

Studies thus far have primarily used the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) to measure cognitive decline which as a composite test does not capture distinct areas of cognitive function such as processing speed, attention, psychomotor speed, abstraction, flexibility, ability to execute and modify a plan of action¹⁷. The goal of this study was to use logistic and ordinal regression models to determine the relationship between anticholinergic burden and three phenotypes: cognitive decline defined by the MMSE and Trail Making Tests, part A and B, physical frailty, and cognitive frailty. Additionally, we included anticholinergic burden in a separate population based predictive model study to determine if anticholinergic burden is predictive of cognitive decline, frailty, and cognitive frailty. The population predictive model incorporates additional measures of disease such as protein and genomic biomarkers thereby evaluating ACB with confounding disease processes (Sargent et al., 2018 in preparation).

METHODS

Data

The subjects in the present study were participants in *Invecchaiare in Chianti* (Aging in Chianti, "InCHIANTI Study"). InCHIANTI was a prospective population based study of 1,453 adults aged 20-102 randomly selected from two towns in Tuscany, Italy using a multistage stratified sampling at baseline from 1998 to 2000 18 . All aspects of the

InCHIANTI research were approved by the ethics committees at the institutions responsible for data collection, and this secondary study was approved by the ethics committee at *Centre de recherché Clinique du CHUS*, project #547. During the initial InCHIANTI baseline 90-minute interview, information was collected on demographic and clinical characteristics for the three phenotypes and baseline medications taken regularly in the prior 15 days to determine anticholinergic burden. The name of the drug, preparation and dosage were collected from medication boxes or bottles including over the counter vitamins, food supplements, sleeping pills, or laxatives. Initial medication information was converted from the brand name to the active ingredient. Measures

For the current study, a total of 2,883 baseline medications were used to analyze the anticholinergic burden effect on 1,155 individuals \geq 65 years of age with cognitive decline, physical frailty, and cognitive frailty. Currently, there are 7 expert-based anticholinergic rating scales for which quantification of the tool is based on expert opinion, and published data, and includes both genders with a mean age of 65 years or older^{4,9}. The Anticholinergic Cognitive Burden (ACB) scale is the most validated scale for evaluating adverse health outcomes including cognitive and physical function^{4,10}. The anticholinergic properties of each medication were quantified using the ACB scale based on each drug's serum anticholinergic activity¹⁹. To determine ACB scores, each participants' medications were assigned points $(0, 1, 2, 3)$ according to the published 2012 update and summed for a total anticholinergic burden score. Higher scores indicate higher anticholinergic properties. An example of medications with ACB scores

include: Amitriptyline $= 3$, Amantadine $= 2$, and Atenolol $= 1$. The ACB scale has identified medications with anticholinergic properties that have correlated with a 0.33point decline in the MMSE score over 2 years 20 . The neuropsychological tests included the MMSE as a test of general cognition and Trail Making Test, part A and B (TMT). The TMT testing was included to further explore distinct areas of cognitive function. TMT-A is used to assess psychomotor speed; scoring is based on time in seconds to completion with a score range of 0 to 300 seconds²¹. TMT-B is used to assess the executive functioning domain (any individual time over the limit of 300-600 seconds was included as 300)²¹. Normative data for time to complete the TMT tests in seconds is stratified by age and education²². Additionally, the neuropsychological profile for individuals with cognitive frailty is considered to be different from those with frailty or cognitive decline alone with recent findings of lower performance on TMT tests^{22,23}. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) self-report scale was used to measure depressive symptoms. The CES-D has been used extensively in epidemiologic studies for depression and physical function displaying similar reliability, validity, and factor structure across a diverse demographic²⁴.

Frailty measures included the number of frailty symptoms with performance test data. Frailty as defined by the cardiovascular health study (CHS), allows for a continuous scoring system versus a nominal system because it can capture the multidimensional nature of frailty¹⁴. The components have concurrent and predictive validity with hazard ratios (HR) ranging from 1.82-4.46 ($p < 0.05$) for outcomes that include incident disease, hospitalization, falls, disability and mortality in community-dwelling older adults¹³. The

InCHIANTI criteria for frailty defined unintentional weight loss as losing weight not related to diet, classified the values of body mass index, strength, walking speed and height based on all subjects \geq 65 years and used two questions of the CES-D for the definition of exhaustion.

Phenotypic Classification

The MMSE score and the TMT part A and B was used to define two phenotypic classifications for cognitive decline and cognitive frailty. All participants completed the MMSE to define cognitive decline and cognitive frailty. Absence of cognitive decline is defined as a score of 24-30 on the education adjusted MMSE $25-27$. Frailty is characterized by individuals with one or more of the Frailty criteria¹³. Cognitive frailty is defined as individuals with cognitive decline and one or more of the frailty criteria²³.

- Robust with no physical frailty and absence of cognitive decline
- Robust with no physical frailty with cognitive decline (MMSE = \leq 23)
- Frail $(≥ 1$ criterion) and absence of cognitive decline
- Frail (≥ 1 criterion) and cognitive decline (MMSE = ≤ 23)

Additional phenotypic classification included mild, moderate, or severe disease defined by the MMSE to characterize 24-30 as normal cognition, a score of 23-18 as moderate cognitive decline (combined mild and moderate degree of impairment), and a score \leq 17 as cognitive impairment^{25,26}. Frailty is characterized by the CHS criteria cut offs and cognitive frailty is defined as individuals with both criteria¹³.

- Robust with no physical frailty and absence of cognitive decline
- Robust with no physical frailty with mild cognitive decline (MMSE = $18-23$)
- Robust with no physical frailty with cognitive impairment (MMSE = \leq 17)
- Pre-frail (1-2 criteria) and absence of cognitive decline
- Frail $(≥ 3$ criteria) and absence of cognitive decline
- Pre-frail (1-2 criteria) and with mild cognitive decline (MMSE = $18-23$)
- Frail $(≥ 3$ criteria) and with mild cognitive decline (MMSE = 18-23)
- Pre-frail (1-2 criteria) and cognitive impairment (MMSE = \leq 17)
- Frail (\geq 3 criteria) and cognitive impairment (MMSE = \leq 17)

Additional neuropsychological testing (TMT-A and B) was used to define cognitive decline and as part of the definition of cognitive frailty²³. TMT-A and B cut off scores for cognitive decline are based on cut off norms established by Ashendorf et al., 2008.

- Robust with no physical frailty and absence of cognitive decline
- Robust with no physical frailty with Cognitive Decline (both Trail $A \geq 78$ and Trail $B \ge 106$)
- Frail (≥ 1 criterion) and Cognitive Decline (both Trail A ≥ 78 and Trail B ≥ 106)

• Frail (≥ 1 criterion) and Cognitive Decline (both Trail A ≥ 78 and Trail B ≥ 106) Numbers of participants were insufficient for statistical analysis to include cognitive decline or cognitive frailty categorized into levels of mild, moderate, and severe phenotype with the TMT.

Statistical Analyses

We used logistic and ordinal regression to investigate the relationship between anticholinergic burden and all three outcomes. Covariates were selected to control for potential confounding effects. Demographic covariates included gender, age, and level of education. Disease processes considered as confounders included baseline diagnosis of: baseline dementia (n=82), vascular dementia (n=41), depression (n=412), and Parkinson's disease ($n=16$) and were included in the models as binary covariates.

In addition to the logistic and ordinal regression, ACB score was included in separate population based predictive model analyses with 298 additional predictors; these

included protein, clinical, and genetic markers of disease. Modeling of the dynamic interactions between confounding disease processes determined the strength of the relationship and predictive value for anticholinergic burden and disease outcome. Predictive modeling via ensemble learning using xgboost allowed for better accuracy by building multiple models, each of which learns to improve upon the errors of a prior model producing a final model that reflects the complex interactions between biological processes (i.e., protein and genetic biomarkers) on cognitive decline and frailty. Parameters for the xgboost model included a stepsize eta of $=$ "0.3", rounds = 5-200, max depth = $"10"$, nthread = $"12"$, objective = "binary:logistic", evaluation metric = "auc", gamma = default = "0" to control the number of trees and prevent overfitting²⁸. Details on the population predictive model results and statistical methods beginning with model development in the InCHIANTI dataset used to train and test classifiers, complete internal validation, and calibration of the model are available in a separate publication (Sargent et al., 2018 in preparation). Bivariate analyses included nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis t-tests to assess differences between groups; medians and maximum quantiles are reported for healthy controls and three phenotypes. Next, Bonferroni correction was conducted to adjusted for multiple comparisons; adjusted pvalues are reported. All statistical analyses were carried out using R V. 3.2.1.. R packages included 'glm2'-Fitting Generalized Linear Models, 'Ordinal'-Regression Models for Ordinal Data, and 'xgboost'-Extreme Gradient Boosting $^{28-30}$.

RESULTS

Medication data was complete for 1,155 participants; table 1 describes the characteristics of the participants by phenotype and the percent of individuals with a total daily ACB score, which ranged from 0-9. Distribution of anticholinergic burden score by phenotype and differences between health control and phenotype are shown in Table 2. Tables displaying results for the top predictive features from the xgboost predictive modeling study are published elsewhere (Sargent et al., 2018 in preparation)

There was a significant association between anticholinergic burden and cognitive decline ($p = 0.02$), frailty ($p < .001$) and cognitive frailty ($p < .001$). Additionally, the odds of having cognitive decline increased by 1.21 points (95% CI = 1.06-1.37, p <.001), the odds of being frail increased by 1.33 (95% CI = $1.18-1.50$, p <.001), and odds of cognitive frailty increased by 1.36 (95% CI = 1.21-1.54, p <.001). Model fit for all three phenotypes using the Wald chi-square test statistic was associated with a p-value of $<$.001, indicating that the overall effect rank was significant. Logistic and ordinal regression results are presented in Table 3 and 4. Results from the population predictive model are ranked by gain, which is a metric based on each feature's contribution in the model. When comparing top features to other features in the model, the greater the gain the more important the feature is for prediction of the outcome. Anticholinergic burden was the top 4% predictor out of 105, 14% of 101, and 70% of 93 selected features during the classifier build, with AUCs ranging from 0.81-0.88 for the outcomes frailty, cognitive frailty, and cognitive decline respectively measured with the MMSE (Sargent et al., 2018) in preparation).

Similarly, there was a significant association found between ACB score and cognitive decline when measured with the TMT-A and TMT-B without adjusting for covariates. When including the covariates age, gender, and baseline dementia individually in the models with only ACB score for TMT-B or age and gender for TMT-A, anticholinergic burden was no longer significant. Additionally, this was true when covariate-by-ACB interaction terms were included; none of the interaction terms was statistically significant (all $p > 0.2$). There was a significant association found between ACB score and cognitive frailty, as measured with TMT-A ($p= 0.007$) and TMT-B ($p < .001$). Model fit for cognitive frailty TMT-A and TMT-B using the Wald chi-square test statistic was associated with a p-value of \leq .001. Logistic regression results for cognitive decline and cognitive frailty measured with TMT are shown in Table 3. In the population predictive modeling results, anticholinergic burden was the top 32% of 149 and 40% of 110 predictors, with AUCs ranging from 0.86-0.83 for the outcomes cognitive decline and cognitive frailty respectively measured with the TMT-A and B (Sargent et al., 2018 in preparation).

DISCUSSION

Participants for all phenotypes were older with a greater proportion of females; few completed a high school education. Participants with cognitive decline, frailty, and cognitive frailty took more medications than individuals without these phenotypes. There were smaller numbers of participants with an ACB score > 4 with most scores above zero clustered between 1-4; suggesting that an ACB score of 1-4 range is sufficient to show association.

Logistic and ordinal regression results found in this study continue to support a relationship between anticholinergic burden and cognitive decline, further strengthen the association with physical frailty, and provide new evidence for an association with cognitive frailty. The population predictive model results with xgboost, showed anticholinergic burden to be a significant predictor for all three phenotypes (Sargent et al., 2018 in preparation).

Although frailty and cognitive decline have been shown to be related, both diseases have long been studied separately. The findings from this study provide the first evidence for a relationship between anticholinergic burden and cognitive frailty, affecting both cognitive speed and executive functioning. The study results show a relationship between anticholinergic burden and cognitive decline when measured with the MMSE but no relationship was observed when cognitive decline was measured with the TMT-A and TMT-B unless cognitive frailty was present. Another study found lower executive function composite scores on the Wechsler Memory Scale-Revised, Logical Memory Immediate Recall, and TMT-B test in a small sample $(n=402)$ of individuals taking anticholinergic medications over 1 year with additional findings of increased brain atrophy and clinical decline³¹. Additionally, previous studies have shown a relationship between anticholinergic burden and transitions between frailty states and increased mortality for individuals who were robust at baseline; with every unit increase in burden being associated with a 73% risk of transition from robust to pre-frail. Further these studies showed that anticholinergic burden is associated with poor mobility, functional decline, psychomotor slowing, and $falls^{5,12,32}$.

A limitation of the study is that this was a secondary analysis of existing data. As such, the medications are from an international database and represent a specific population of individuals and do not consider potential differences in prescribing patterns throughout the world. Additionally, confounding may be a factor; for which it becomes difficult to distinguish between the effects of the medications and the disease process. Therefore, further research with adequately powered randomized controlled trials or prospective cohort studies with follow up periods in the clinical setting are needed to distinguish medication effect from disease progression. These findings highlight the need for longitudinal studies focused on understanding which domains of memory are affected.

Future research should focus on methods for detecting high risk individuals in the clinical setting, the relationship between Apolipoprotein $E \epsilon 4$ and anticholinergic medications, and whether anticholinergic medications are a modifiable risk factor for the prevention of cognitive decline and physical frailty. Identification of reversible causes for cognitive and physical impairment is critical for the aging population.

Clinicians need to be aware of these findings and review cumulative anticholinergic burden in robust and vulnerable individuals and minimize the overall anticholinergic burden before symptoms of cognitive and physical decline are detectible. Until a better understanding of the implications that these findings have in the clinical setting, caution must be applied since medications with anticholinergic effects are used to treat many chronic diseases, such as congestive heart failure and hypertension. These findings

encourage new research and may lead to effective interventions for the prevention and treatment of cognitive and physical decline in an aging population.

CONCLUSION

Anticholinergic burden is associated with both cognitive decline and physical frailty. Efforts to better understand the epigenetic effects, sum dose effect, and identify individuals in clinical settings who may require anticholinergic medication discontinuation are important next steps to prevent anticholinergic burden induced outcomes.

Table 1. Characteristics of participants by phenotype

Notes: SD = standard deviation, * two tailed t-Test with means and SD

% (n)	Cognitive Decline	Frailty	Cognitive Frailty	Cognitive Decline		Cognitive Frailty	
ACB	MMSE $(n=296)$	CHS $(n=512)$	MMSE (223)	Trail A $(n=418)$	Trail B $(n=493)$	Trail A $(n=267)$	Trail B $(n=274)$
0	47.0% (139)	51.0% (261)	42.2% (94)	57.9% (242)	62.9%(310)	50.2% (134)	55.5% (152)
1	23.6% (70)	22.9% (117)	25.1% (56)	20.6% (86)	20.1% (99)	22.5% (60)	21.2% (58)
$\overline{2}$	14.5% (43)	11.9% (61)	16.1% (36)	10.8% (45)	7.9% (39)	13.1% (35)	$9.9\% (27)$
3	10.1% (30)	8.8% (45)	11.2% (25)	6.7% (28)	5.5% (27)	8.2% (22)	$7.7\%(21)$
4	2.7% (8)	3% (16)	3.1% (7)	$2.4\%(10)$	2.4% (12)	3.4% (9)	3.6% (10)
5	1.0% (3)	1.4% (7)	.9%(2)	1.0% (4)	1.0% (5)	1.5% (4)	1.8% (5)
6	$.7\%(2)$.8%(4)	.9%(2)	$.5\%(2)$.2%(1)	$.7\%$ (2)	$.4\%(1)$
9	$.3\%(1)$.2%(1)	$.4\%(1)$	$.2\%(1)$	(0)	.4%(1)	(0)
Control	0[6]	0[5]	0[6]	0[5]	O[4]	0[5]	0[4]
Phenotype	1[9]	0[9]	1[9]	0[9]	0[6]	0[9]	0[6]
p-value*	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	.042	< .001	< .001

Table 2. Distribution of anticholinergic burden score by phenotype and difference between health control and phenotype

Table 3. Generalized linear regression results: association between anticholinergic burden and phenotypes

Table 4. Ordinal regression results: association between anticholinergic burden and phenotype

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SUMMARY

This dissertation consists of four manuscripts; 1) an integrative review of the measurements for cognitive frailty, 2) a systematic review of the clinical and biological markers for cognitive decline and physical frailty, 3) an innovative population predictive model analyses establishing biological plausibility for cognitive frailty, 4) and a new finding of anticholinergic burden as a predictor of frailty and cognitive frailty. The results from this study establish a foundation for an understanding of the underlying biological mechanisms for the relationship between cognitive decline and physical frailty and found anticholinergic burden as one of the top predictors for frailty and cognitive frailty. In seeking to explore the importance and applicability of these results it is critical that others continue to replicate the model results. To accompany manuscript 3, help with replication and extension of this work, the code has been made publically available for the population predictive model.

Implications

The results from this dissertation have several implications for future research and have a potential for translation into practice. Through the lens of Complex Systems Theory, this dissertation begins to unravel the complexity behind a geriatric syndrome providing biological plausibility to cognitive frailty. Geriatric syndromes such as cognitive frailty are highly multifactorial and variable across the aging spectrum lending themselves to new ways of investigation. As Bryne (1998) notes: Not only can the complex not always be derived, even in principle from the less complex,... we can often

only understand the simpler [cognitive frailty] in terms of its origins in the more complex (p. 16). By using the framework of complex systems theory and an innovative Boosted trees machine learning technique (xgboost) we determined key biological mechanism for a dysregulation across multiple systems as the potential cause for cognitive frailty. The future to understanding complex geriatric syndrome should include a systems approach by using highly accurate statistical modeling to identify measurable markers. There were multiple biological associations determined by the study results that should be investigated further. One of the interesting findings is anticholinergic burden in conjunction with the association of *SLCO1B1* as predictors for cognitive frailty. SLO1B1 is an important pharmacokinetic gene that is involved in the removal of drug compounds and transport of drug metabolites at the blood-brain barrier(1). It has been implicated as a marker of lean muscle mass loss and may affect the distribution of drugs into the central nervous system(1,2).

Limitations

The limitations of the dissertation research included the use of a small homogenous sample with large numbers of biomarkers creating limitations for translation into clinical research. Additionally, the study was retrospective using existing data. The analyses used a randomly assigned training subset to validate the model within a relatively homogenous InCHIANTI cohort. Additionally, no external validation of the model was completed. The model would be strengthened by external validation in a in a mixed ethnic and demographic age range. Through the process of completing this dissertation I have gained invaluable expertise in statically modeling of a large dataset and have

learned skills in the field of bioinformatics. The dissertation required me to learn bash and R coding, along with learning how to manipulate genetic data in PLINK.

Future research

There are several areas for future research based on this dissertation work. There is a need to test and validate the model in a second more ethnically diverse population before translation into clinical practice. Further investigate anticholinergic burden as an epigenetic cause of cognitive frailty by exploring the relationship between putative genetic markers discovered in the model analyses (i.e. *SLCO1B1* and *COMT*). Some of these findings can be translated into clinical studies. Research focusing on methods for detecting high-risk individuals in the clinical setting and descriptive studies to understand the scope and effect of cognitive frailty are needed. Intervention studies are essential to understanding the role of nutrition and/or physical activities have on neuroinflammatory cytokines and other system markers for cognitive frail individual's progression. Additionally, further work can be done on whether anticholinergic medications are a modifiable risk factor for the prevention of cognitive frailty. Identification of reversible causes for cognitive and physical impairment is critical for the aging population.

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APPENDICES MANUSCRIPT 1: Supplemental documents

Appendix A. Search Strategies - Conducted January 30, 2015

Table 3. Data Extraction and Measurement Properties

* OCEBM Levels of Evidence Working Group. "The Oxford Levels of Evidence 2". Oxford Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine. http://www.cebm.net/?s=levels+of+evidence.

§ Results reported from original study

y Operational definition terms were reported in the table as written in the original study

* Operational definition terms were reported in the table as written in the original study

* Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS)

£ Clinical Dementia Rating (CDR)

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MANUSCRIPT 2: Supplemental documents

Table I. Clinical and biomarkers results

* OCEBM Levels of Evidence Working Group. "The Oxford Levels of Evidence 2". Oxford Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine. http://www.cebm.net/?s=levels+of+evidence.

Table II. Genetic studies for cognitive decline and frailty

Figure I. PubMed search strategy

(("Frailty"[TIAB] OR "Frail"[TIAB] OR "Physical Frailty"[TIAB] OR "Frail Elderly"[Mesh] OR "Sarcopenia"[Mesh] OR "Muscle Weakness"[Mesh] OR "hand strength"[Mesh] OR "motor activity"[Mesh] OR "weight loss"[Mesh] OR "fatigue"[Mesh] OR "lassitude"[tiab] OR "motor activity"[tiab] OR "motor activities"[tiab] OR "physical activities"[tiab] OR "locomotor activity"[tiab] OR "locomotor activities"[tiab] OR "hand strength"[tiab] OR "grip"[tiab] OR "grips"[tiab] OR "grasp"[tiab] OR "grasps"[tiab] OR "gait speed"[tiab] OR "grip strength"[tiab] OR "physical activity"[tiab] OR "weight loss"[tiab] OR "fatigue"[tiab] OR "sarcopenia"[tiab] OR "tiredness"[tiab] OR "muscular weakness"[tiab])

OR

("Alzheimer Disease"[Mesh] OR "Dementia"[Mesh] OR "Mild Cognitive Impairment"[Mesh] OR "Cognition Disorders"[Mesh] OR "Alzheimer"[tiab] OR "Alzheimers"[tiab] OR "Alzheimer's"[tiab] OR "presenile dementia"[tiab] OR "senile dementia"[tiab] OR "cognitive impairment"[tiab] OR "cognitive impairments"[tiab] OR "neurocognitive disorder"[tiab] OR "neurocognitive disorders"[tiab] OR "dementia"[tiab] OR "dementias"[tiab] OR "cognitive decline"[tiab] OR "cognitive declines"[tiab] OR "cognition disorder"[tiab] OR "cognition disorders"[tiab])

OR

("cognitive frailty"[tiab])

AND

(("Biomarkers "[Mesh] OR "biological markers"[tiab] OR "biological marker"[tiab] OR "biologic markers"[tiab] OR "biologic marker"[tiab] OR "biomarkers"[tiab] OR "biomarker"[tiab] OR "clinical markers"[tiab] OR "clinical marker"[tiab] OR "Immunologic markers"[tiab] OR "immunologic marker"[tiab] OR "immune marker"[tiab] OR "immune markers"[tiab] OR "viral markers"[tiab] OR "viral marker"[tiab] OR "serum markers"[tiab] OR "serum marker"[tiab] OR "surrogate endpoints"[tiab] OR "surrogate endpoints"[tiab] OR "surrogate end points"[tiab] OR "surrogate end point"[tiab] OR "surrogate markers"[tiab] OR "surrogate marker"[tiab] OR "biochemical markers"[tiab] OR "biochemical marker"[tiab] OR "laboratory markers"[tiab] OR "laboratory marker"[tiab] OR "disease marker"[tiab] OR "disease markers"[tiab])

OR

("Genetic markers"[Mesh] OR "genetic markers"[tiab] OR "genetic marker"[tiab] OR "DNA markers"[tiab] OR "DNA marker"[tiab] OR "Chromosome marker"[tiab] OR "Chromosome markers")

OR

("Genome-Wide Association Study"[Mesh] OR "genome wide association"[tiab] OR "whole genome association"[tiab] OR "GWAS"[tiab] OR "candidate gene study"[tiab] OR "candidate gene studies"[tiab]))

AND

("Clinical Trials as Topic"[Mesh] OR "Clinical Trial" [Publication Type] OR "Randomized Controlled Trial" [Publication Type] OR "Longitudinal Studies"[Mesh] OR "Random Allocation"[Mesh] OR "Cross-Sectional Studies"[Mesh] OR "clinical trial"[tiab] OR "clinical trials"[tiab] OR "randomized controlled"[tiab] OR "randomised controlled"[tiab] "random allocation"[tiab] OR "cross sectional study"[tiab] OR "cross sectional studies"[tiab] OR "cross sectional analysis"[tiab] OR "cross sectional analyses"[tiab] OR "longitudinal study"[tiab] OR "longitudinal studies"[tiab] OR "cross sectional survey"[tiab] OR "cross sectional surveys"[tiab] OR "prevalence study"[tiab] OR "prevalence studies"[tiab] OR "randomization"[tiab] OR "randomisation"[tiab] OR "cross-sectional research"[tiab] OR "crosssectional design"[tiab] OR "Genome-Wide Association Study"[Mesh] OR "genome wide association"[tiab] OR "whole genome association"[tiab] OR "GWAS"[tiab] OR "candidate gene study"[tiab] OR "candidate gene studies"[tiab])

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8614%7B&%7Disbn=%7B&%7Dvolume=52%7B&%7Dissue=1%7B&%7Dspage=66%7B&% 7Dpages=66-

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MANUSCRIPT 3: Supplementary Methods, Statistical and Genomic Analyses

Reproducibility

In seeking to explore the importance and applicability of these results it is critical that others continue to replicate model results before they can be used in the clinical setting. To accompany this report, help with replication and extension of our work, the code has been made publically available for model I and model II online.

Database

The subjects in the present study were participants in *Invecchaiare in Chianti* (Aging in Chianti, "InCHIANTI Study"). InCHIANTI is a prospective population based study of 1,453 adults aged 20-102 randomly selected from two towns in Tuscany, Italy using a multistage stratified sampling at baseline from 1998 to 2000¹. All aspects of the InCHIANTI research were approved by the ethics committees at the institutions responsible for data collection. Definitions used to establish phenotype sub-groups in this study

Cognitive decline – mild neurocognitive disorders

Evidence of modest cognitive decline from a previous level of performance in one or more cognitive domains (complex attention, executive function, learning and memory, language, perceptual motor, or social cognition) with a modest impairment in cognitive performance by standardized neuropsychological testing or clinical assessment in absence of a diagnosis of dementia^{2,34}.

Frailty

The operational definition for frailty is defined as a clinical syndrome condition including 3 out of the 5 criteria related a physical phenotype including: 1) weak muscle strength (grip strength), 2) slow gait speed, 3) unintentional weight loss, 4) exhaustion and low physical activity⁵. Prefrailty includes 1 or 2 of the criteria is present, identifying a sub-group of individuals potentially progressing to frailty⁵.

Cognitive Frailty

A syndrome in older adults with evidence of both physical frailty and cognitive impairment without a clinical diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or other dementia 6 . Phenotypic classification for this study

144

Model I

Participants with an MMSE normal cognition 24-30 and cognitive decline \leq 23^{7–9}. In this study frailty is characterized by individuals with one or more of the frailty criterion⁵. Cognitive frailty is defined as individuals with cognitive decline and one or more of frailty criterion¹⁰.

- Robust with no physical frailty and absence of cognitive decline
- Robust with no physical frailty with cognitive (MMSE = \leq 23)
- Frail (\geq 1 criteria) and absence of cognitive decline
- Frail (\geq 1 criteria) and cognitive decline (MMSE = \leq 23)

Model II

Participants that completed the MMSE with additional neuropsychiatric testing Trail Making Test, Part A and B (TMT) to define cognitive decline and cognitive frailty^{10,11}. TMT cut off scores for cognitive decline are based on cut off norms established by Ashendorf et al., 2008.

- Robust with no physical frailty and absence of cognitive decline
- Robust with no physical frailty with cognitive decline (Trail A \geq 78, Trail B \geq 106)
- Frail (≥ 1 criteria) and cognitive decline (Trail A ≥ 78 , Trail B ≥ 106)
- Frail (≥ 1 criteria) and cognitive decline (Trail A ≥ 78 , Trail B ≥ 106)

Laboratory assay methods

At the baseline survey, most of the participants performed 24-hour urine collection early in the morning mid-stream sample urine for the routine examination. Total urinary polyphenols were measured at the Department of Food Science and Technology, School of Pharmacy, University of Barcelona, Spain. Prior to blood collection all participants consumed a diet free of meat and fish. Participants donated fasting blood samples for routine blood examinations. Blood collection was performed with the standard procedure method to prevent red cell hemolysis. The blood collection included two sets of collection tubes: one for routine tests and second for collecting specimens including serum, plasma, DNA for the biological bank. All routine blood tests, performed in the Laboratory of Clinical Chemistry and Microbiological Assays, Annunziata Hospital in Florence, Italy. Plasma fatty acids (FAs) were measured by the Section of Gerontology and Geriatrics, Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, Perugia, Italy.

The technique used was gas chromatography with a fused silica capillary column to achieve the optimum separation of the different fatty acids.

Software for analyses

All statistical analyses were carried out using R V. 3.2.1. R is free, open-source software that provides many statistical and graphic techniques. R packages used included 'glm2'-Fitting Generalized Linear Models, 'Ordinal'-Regression Models for Ordinal Data, and 'xgboost'-Extreme Gradient Boosting^{12–14}. The software package PLINK, an analysis toolset was used for the management of genotype data and basic associating testing^{15,16}.

Model generation

The predictive genetic and laboratory biomarkers were identified in a comprehensive systematic review and analyzed using an Extreme Gradient Boosting (xgboost) in R^{14} . While boosting was initially developed for machine learning, 'xgboost' in R is based in boosted trees. Xgboost is an open source tool and a variant of the gradient boosting machine and uses a tree based model. Xgboost is used in this study for a supervised learning problem where the variables identified from the systematic review are used to predict three phenotypes cognitive decline, physical frailty, and cognitive frailty.

Evaluation of the model

With the use of any predictive model in machine learning there is a chance for inflated risk of capitalizing on chance features (over fitting) in the data. Over fitting of the integrative model was mitigated in two ways: 1) having a distinct training and validation process for the model and 2) using xgb in R which has a built-in parameter settings for selection to reduce poor predictive performance. *Internal validation:* A randomly assigned training subset was used to validate the model within the InCHIANTI cohort *in silico* (via simulation).

Calibration of the model

Parameter estimates for each predictive factor and associated descriptive statistics was evaluated to provide biological insight into the underpinnings of the classification algorithm. We first evaluated the calibration by partitioning the data into 5, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 75, 100 and 200 groups and then ran the calibration test. Next, we repeated tests for all possible values between 5-200 groups and evaluated the distribution of the test statistic. The best prediction

146

thresholds were determined using AUC, 87.7% for Model I and 86.4% for Model II. Population predictive features by phenotype ranked by gain for Model I are presented in Tables 4-6 and Model II Tables 7-9.

Genetic Data

Genotypic data was generated at the National Institute on Aging's Laboratory of Neurogenics. Samples of genomic DNA extracted from leukocytes 17 . Genotypic data used for the model were extracted out of the binary Plink files from the InCHIANTI database. SNPs which could not be identified in the binary files were extracted from genotype imputed files, genotype imputation was completed with Minimac (V2). The SNPs included meet the following standard: per variant and per sample missingness < 5%, European ancestry, MAF < 0.001 and a rsq < 0.3. Additionally, Samples were filtered for 95% or greater genotyping call rate, no ancestry outliers, and no sex discrepancies.

Supplementary Data Table II: Variants included in the Genomic Risk Score GRS calculations and individual effect estimates of single variants for predictive modeling. Phenotype association is based on the findings from the systematic review and the relationship found between variant and disease **outcome.**

Notes: *Proxy SNP, Cog/Frail – variant was found for both phenotypes in the systematic review, bold text indicates the closest gene

Genetic risk scores

One hundred and thirty-one variants where catalogued from a large systematic review and used to construct genetic risk scores for three models. All variants were used to create an all risk score $(n=132)$, variants related to the phenotypes cognitive decline and physical frailty constructed cognitive risk scores (n=105) and frailty risk scores (n=27). Risk scores were calculated by summation of the number of risk alleles across all the variants divided by the number of SNPs in the score to obtain an average number of risk alleles per locus. After the scaled risk allele counts were summed and divided by the number of loci, they were transformed into Z scores. Z score transformation assists in communicating the effect estimates with the Z corresponding to a single standard deviation from the control mean genetic risk for the phenotypes. All risk scores were calculated using PLINK. R V. 3.2.1 was used to fit multinomial and logistic regression models using standard covariates and risk scores as predictors of cognitive decline, physical frailty, and cognitive frailty as the outcome variable. Stepwise backward and forward selection using AIC and p values facilitated the best fit models.

Phenotype (n)		All Risk Scores	Cognition Risk Scores	Frail Risk Scores
Cognitive Decline Trail B (634)	p	.6097	.5959	.4440
	β	.05	.05	$-.07$
	SE	.09	.09	.09
Cognitive Decline Trail A (525)	p	.0351	.0370	.3274
	β	.16	.16	.07
	SE	.08	.07	.07
Cognitive Frailty Trail B (325)	p	.2082	.1992	.7394
	β	.11	.11	.03
	SE	.08	.09	.08
Cognitive Frailty Trail A (302)	p	.6298	.4242	.2734
	β	.04	.06	-0.08
	SE	.08	.08	.08

Model II Genetic risk scores – Population predictive model features by phenotype

Table V: Frailty Features Model I

Table VI: Cognitive Frailty Features Model I

Table VII: Cognitive Decline Features Model II

Table VIII: Frailty Features Model II

Table IX: Cognitive Frailty Features Model II

Table XI. Genomic univariate results Model I

Note: bold text indicates the closes gene

Table XII. Genomic univariate results Model II

Note: bold text indicates the closes gene

Table XIII. Difference between health control and cognitive decline results Model I

Table XVIII. Difference between healthy control and cognitive frailty Model II

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Categorical Scoring:

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Categorical Scoring:
• Possible anticholinergics include those listed with a **Possible anticholinergics include those listed with a** score of 1; Definite anticholinergics include those score of 1; Definite anticholinergics include those isted with a score of 2 or 3 listed with a score of 2 or 3

Numerical Scoring:

- Numerical Scoring:
• Add the score contributed to each selected medication Add the score contributed to each selected medication in each scoring category
	- in each scoring category
Add the number of possible or definite Anticholinergic Add the number of possible or definite Anticholinergic medications medications \bullet

- Notes:
• Each definite anticholinergic may increase the risk of **t** Each definite anticholinergic may increase the risk of cognitive impairment by 46% over 6 years. ³
For each on point increase in the ACB total score, a cognitive impairment by 46% over 6 years. 3
- decline in MMSE score of 0.33 points over 2 years has \bullet For each on point increase in the ACB total score, a $\ddot{}$
- Additionally, each one point increase in the ACB total
score has been correlated with a 26% increase in the Additionally, each one point increase in the ACB total score has been correlated with a 26% increase in the been suggested. 4 risk of death.⁴ risk of death. 4 \bullet

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MANUSCRIPT 4: Anticholinergic Burden Scale

Anticholinergic Burden Scale script with instructions for research assistant and/or participant permission to use instrument from author

Anticholinergic Burden Scale Permission

We do not have a formal letter. You can use the following email:

You have permission to use the Anticholinergic Cognitive Burden Scale for your dissertation related work including both research and educational purposes.

Malaz

Malaz Boustani, MD, MPH

The information found in the electronic version of this study's smart form and uploaded documents now represents the currently approved study, documents, and HIPAA pathway (if applicable). You may access this information by clicking the Study Number above.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Subjects Protection (ORSP) or the IRB reviewer(s) assigned to this study.

• The reviewer(s) assigned to your study will be listed in the History tab and on the study workspace. Click on their name to see their contact information.

Attachment – Conditions of Exempt Approval *Conditions of Exempt Approval:*

In order to comply with federal regulations, industry standards, and the terms of this approval, the investigator must (as applicable):

- 1. Conduct the research as described in and required by the Protocol.
- 2. Provide non-English speaking patients with a translation of the approved Consent Form in the research participant's first language. The Panel must approve the translation.
- 3. The following changes to the protocol **must be** submitted to the IRB panel for review and approval before the changes are instituted. Changes that do not meet these criteria do not have to be submitted to the IRB. If there is a question about whether a change must be sent to the IRB please call the ORSP for clarification.

THESE CHANGES MUST BE SUBMITTED:

- Change in principal investigator
- Any change that increases the risk to the participant

TRAINING AIM DOCUMENT

 $\overline{\mathbb{S}}$ $\overline{\mathscr{G}}$ **WCU** Center for Clinical and Translational Research **OVCU** Office of the *Bioinformatics 101 Seminar Series* Certificate of Completion *Presented by the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research and Vice President for Research and Innovations Is Awarded To* Lana Sargent For the successful completion of all requirements November 16, 2016 F. Gerard Moeller, M.D. Director, C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translation Research, Associate Vice President for Clinical ResearchKrzysztof Cios, Ph.D., D.Sc., MBA Director, Enterprise Informatics Director, Biomedical Informatics Core SS SS