

Principles of Orthogeriatrics

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Orthogeriatrics is a specialized field of medicine that focuses on the care of elderly patients who have sustained a hip fracture. This interdisciplinary approach combines the expertise of orthopedic surgeons and geriatricians to provide comprehensive care for these patients. The principles of orthogeriatrics aim to optimize outcomes for older adults with hip fractures by addressing their unique medical, functional, and social needs.

Key Terms and Vocabulary

1. Orthogeriatrics: The medical specialty that focuses on the care of elderly patients with hip fractures.
2. Geriatrician: A physician who specializes in the care of older adults.
3. Orthopedic surgeon: A surgeon who specializes in the treatment of musculoskeletal conditions, including fractures.
4. Hip fracture: A break in the proximal femur (thigh bone) near the hip joint, commonly occurring in older adults due to osteoporosis.
5. Interdisciplinary: Involving multiple disciplines or fields of study, such as orthopedics and geriatrics working together in orthogeriatrics.
6. Comprehensive care: Holistic care that addresses all aspects of a patient's health and well-being.
7. Medical: Pertaining to the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and injuries.
8. Functional: Referring to a person's ability to perform activities of daily living, such as walking, dressing, and bathing.
9. Social: Relating to a person's interactions with others and their community.
10. Optimize: To make the best or most effective use of resources or opportunities.
11. Outcomes: The results or effects of a particular treatment or intervention.
12. Unique: Distinct or different from others in a specific way.
13. Medical history: A record of a patient's past illnesses, injuries, and treatments.
14. Functional assessment: Evaluation of a patient's ability to perform daily tasks and activities.
15. Cognitive assessment: Evaluation of a patient's mental function, including memory, attention, and reasoning.
16. Delirium: Acute confusion and disorientation, often seen in older adults after surgery or illness.
17. Osteoporosis: A condition characterized by low bone density and increased risk of fractures.
18. Fragility fracture: A fracture that occurs with minimal trauma, often associated with osteoporosis.
19. Preoperative: Before surgery or a medical procedure.
20. Postoperative: After surgery or a medical procedure.
21. Rehabilitation: The process of restoring function and independence after an injury or illness.
22. Multidisciplinary team: A group of healthcare professionals from different specialties who work together to provide comprehensive care.

23. Analgesia: Pain relief or management.
24. Thromboprophylaxis: Measures taken to prevent blood clots, such as medication or compression stockings.
25. Early mobilization: Encouraging patients to start moving and walking soon after surgery to prevent complications.
26. Geriatric assessment: Comprehensive evaluation of an older adult's medical, functional, and social needs.
27. Frailty: A state of increased vulnerability to adverse health outcomes due to age-related declines in physiological reserve.
28. Care transitions: The process of moving a patient from one healthcare setting to another, such as from the hospital to a rehabilitation facility.
29. Palliative care: Supportive care focused on improving quality of life for patients with serious illnesses.
30. Advance care planning: Discussions with patients about their preferences for medical care in the event they are unable to make decisions for themselves.

Examples and Practical Applications

1. A patient with a hip fracture undergoes surgery and is at risk for delirium postoperatively. The orthogeriatrics team conducts a cognitive assessment to monitor the patient's mental status and implements strategies to prevent delirium, such as promoting sleep and orientation.
2. An older adult with osteoporosis sustains a fragility fracture and requires rehabilitation after surgery. The multidisciplinary team, including physical therapists, occupational therapists, and social workers, collaborates to develop a personalized rehabilitation plan to help the patient regain independence.
3. A frail elderly patient with multiple medical comorbidities is admitted to the hospital for a hip fracture. The geriatrician performs a comprehensive geriatric assessment to identify the patient's unique needs and develops a care plan that addresses not only the fracture but also the patient's overall health and well-being.
4. A patient with a hip fracture is discharged from the hospital to a skilled nursing facility for rehabilitation. The orthogeriatrics team coordinates care transitions to ensure a smooth transfer of care and communicates with the facility staff to provide continuity of care for the patient.
5. A patient with advanced dementia sustains a hip fracture and is not a candidate for surgery. The orthogeriatrics team discusses advance care planning with the patient's family to determine the best approach to care, focusing on comfort and quality of life.

Challenges and Considerations

1. Managing complex medical conditions: Older adults with hip fractures often have multiple medical comorbidities, which can complicate their care and increase the risk of complications.
2. Frailty and functional decline: Frailty and functional decline are common in older adults with hip fractures, requiring a tailored approach to rehabilitation and recovery.
3. Communication and coordination: Effective communication and coordination among members of the orthogeriatrics team are essential to provide comprehensive care and ensure optimal outcomes for patients.
4. Palliative care and end-of-life decisions: Some patients with hip fractures may not be candidates for surgery or may have poor prognoses, necessitating discussions about palliative care and end-of-life

decisions.

5. Care transitions and continuity of care: Smooth transitions between healthcare settings, such as from the hospital to rehabilitation or home, are crucial to prevent gaps in care and ensure the best outcomes for patients.

By understanding the principles of orthogeriatrics and key terms related to the care of older adults with hip fractures, healthcare professionals can provide high-quality, comprehensive care that addresses the unique needs of this population. Through a multidisciplinary approach, effective communication, and a focus on optimizing outcomes, the orthogeriatrics team can help older adults with hip fractures achieve the best possible recovery and quality of life.