How does a Novel Triage Tool for Patients Aged 65 and Over Who have Fallen Less than Two Metres Identify the Seriously Injured Older Adult in Comparison to Existing Tools?

Dr H. Wilkins*, Dr S. Meredith**, Dr S. Midgley***

Background

Increasing numbers of patients aged 65 and over are attending Emergency Departments with serious injuries after low-level falls. Their injuries are often identified late. Previous work demonstrated that current triage tools for older low-energy trauma patients had low specificity resulting in significant levels of over-triage. To create a tool which meets ideal performance characteristics, a Delphi study in which EM consultants and trigae nurses were asked to identify criteria they used to decide who needs immediate assessment, when attending with possible injuries after a low-level fall. From this study a new triage tool was created.

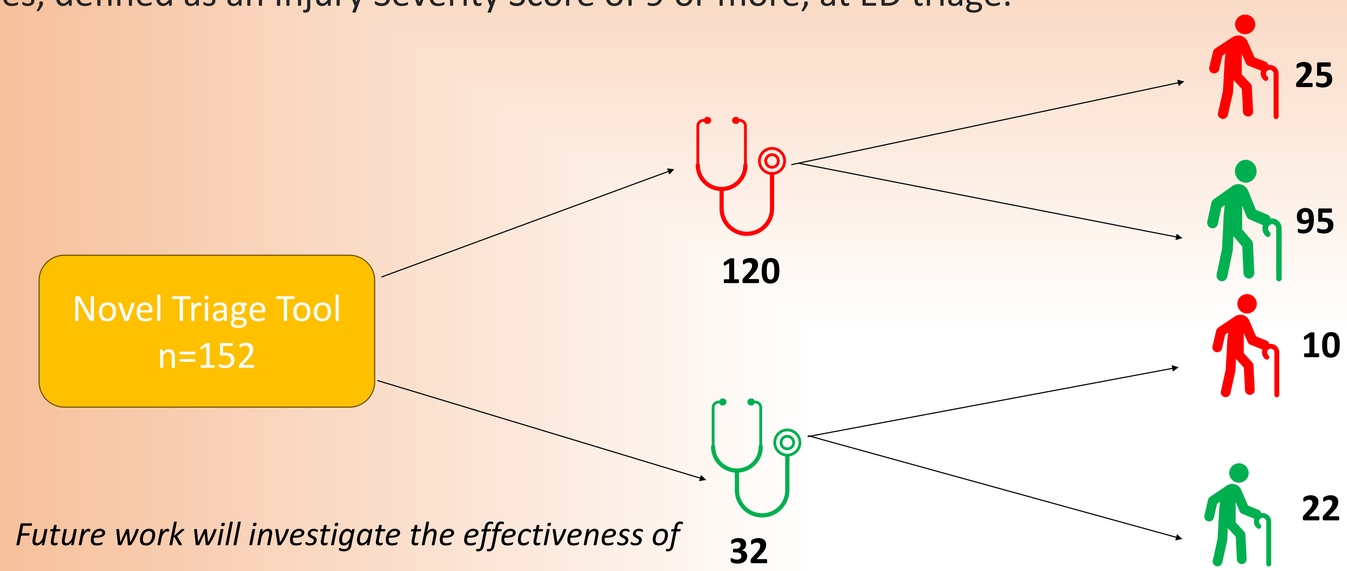
Methods:

A retrospective case notes review of 152 consecutive patients attending an East Midlands Trauma Unit after a fall or collapse from a height of less than two metres was carried out. Data was collected on whether the patients' met criteria for immediate review as determined by the new triage tool and two existing tools and on their final diagnoses which were used to calculate an Injury severity score (ISS).

The aim of this study was to determine whether the new triage tool had improved parameters to identify older patients with serious injuries, defined as an Injury Severity Score of 9 or more, at ED triage.

Table 1 – Performance of Triage tools in identifying those with and ISS of 9+ when immediate assessment indicated

Novel Triage Tool	
Sensitivity	71%
Specificity	19%
Pan London Red	
Sensitivity	83%
Specificity	29%
FT3 Red	
Sensitivity	66%
Specificity	37%



Future work will investigate the effectiveness of the novel tool at identifying people who need a 15-minute review and focus on refining the new triage tool to improve performance.

Summary:

The novel triage tool was averagely good at picking up significantly injured patients but not as good at distinguishing them from the less seriously injured ones compared to the existing tools

*EM Teaching Fellow, Royal Derby Hospital **ST6 EM, Lincoln County Hospital ***Consultant in EM, Royal Derby Hospital. IRAS number is 305961. Funded by RCEM.

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