



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

“Correlates of Frailty Among Homeless Adults”

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Quick Takeaways:

- Homeless persons are more likely to experience challenging life events such as trauma, incarceration, and mental and physical health issues that may increase their frailty risk.
- Frailty has an inverse relationship with nutrition, resilience, and social support.

Study:

The researchers identified 150 homeless adults in Los Angeles, CA who were over age 40, English-speaking, and not actively experiencing a psychotic episode. The homeless adults were surveyed using a modified version of the Frailty Framework Among Vulnerable Populations (FFVHP), which is a framework focused on the physical, psychological, and social dynamics of frailty. The researchers utilized pieces of the FFVHP to look specifically at situational, behavioral, health, and resource factors.

The main focus of this study was to begin identifying factors correlated with frailty for homeless adults to inform development of a frailty framework specific to homeless and vulnerable populations.

Findings:

Of the 150 participants in the study, over 50 percent were considered frail and 10 percent were considered most frail. Chronological age was a predictive factor for frailty. This study found a weak but significant relationship between frailty and being a woman. It also found inverse relationships between frailty and resilience, social support, and nutrition. While the study found no relationship between length of time homeless and frailty, the lack of longitudinal data leaves this question open for additional study.

The study found a moderate relationship between health care usage and frailty. Building on previous research that has found food insufficiency to be linked to increased hospitalization, this study makes the link between poor nutrition and both physical frailty and increased use of emergency services.

Conclusion:

Additional research is needed to better understand the dynamics between frailty and social supports, age, gender, and length of time homeless for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Food insufficiency leads to increased use of emergency services, so addressing nutrition may reduce frailty and decrease demand on emergency services. Programs that work with homeless veterans, including those who are aging, can integrate nutritionist services or nutrition workshops to combat frailty earlier. As veterans who are homeless continue to age, research will need to examine the relationship between frailty and chronic disease and healthcare services.