

# Improving collateral history taking for inpatients in geriatrics

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## Introduction:

The geriatric population has a high incidence of dementia, delirium and frailty meaning often these patients cannot give comprehensive histories themselves. We are left with missing pieces of the puzzle; we might not know their 'normal' and frequently ask: 'Are they always like this?'. [1]

A collateral history becomes a valuable tool, contributing to a Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment and assisting the whole MDT to make informed decisions for patient-centred care.

## Method:

Using PDSA methodology, collateral histories taken by junior doctors were analysed before and after implementation of a poster (figure 1) and teaching session.

## Aims:

1. To improve the quality of collateral histories taken for patients admitted to the geriatric wards, measured against 8 domains.
2. To encourage timely collateral histories, within 48 hours of admission to the ward.



Figure 1: Poster displayed on wards

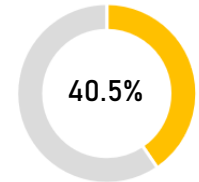
## Results:

Intervention produced a statistically significant increase ( $P < 0.05$ ) in the overall mean percentage of domains being covered in collateral histories (figure 2).

Individual improvement was seen in every domain (figure 3).

It was already common practice to take collateral histories within 48 hours of admission to the ward (91%) which was sustained post-intervention (88%).

Pre-intervention mean



Post-intervention mean

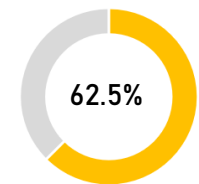


Figure 2: Combined mean across all domains

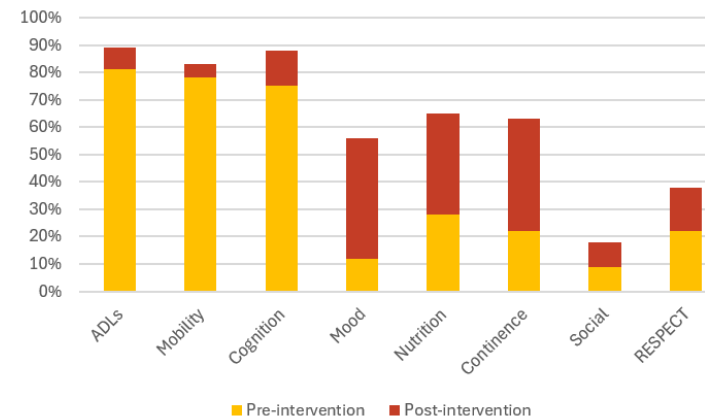


Figure 3: Breakdown by domain

## References:

- [1] *Taking a collateral history: the missing piece of the puzzle* (2023). *BMJ* 2023;382:e076462

## Conclusion:

Use of a poster as a prompt, and delivering teaching, led to more thorough collateral histories. This suggests two barriers are knowing what to ask and perceived importance; elements which could be integrated into early postgraduate education. The impact on patient care has the potential to be significant and multidimensional but further work would be needed to understand this.