



Synopsis

Home-based extended rehabilitation for older people with frailty (HERO): a multicentre randomised controlled trial with health economic analysis and process evaluation

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

Why did we do this research?

When older people with frailty are admitted to hospital, they often lose independence. Short-term National Health Service rehabilitation can improve independence during hospital stays or following return home. However, independence often deteriorates again once this rehabilitation ends. For these older people who already require some support at home, this further loss of independence can be devastating. This often leads to the person being readmitted to hospital, becoming dependent on homecare services and possibly needing to move to a care home. We wanted to see if a home exercise programme supported by physiotherapists, providing extended rehabilitation after hospital admission, could help these older people after discharge home.

What did we do?

Between December 2017 and August 2021, 740 older adults (aged 65 and over) with frailty agreed to take part in our research. We approached people who were being discharged from hospital or short-term National Health Service rehabilitation services after an illness or injury, either just before they were discharged or within 14 days of discharge. People were recruited from multiple hospitals and allocated randomly (by chance) to the exercise programme or usual care. 410 participants received our exercise programme. The other 330 participants received their usual care only. We collected information from participants on their health, well-being and circumstances for 12 months. We compared the two groups to see if the group who received the exercise programme benefited from it. We observed physiotherapists providing the programme to see how it was delivered, looked at the cost-effectiveness of the programme and asked participants about their experiences.

What did we find?

We found that although the exercise programme was delivered largely as planned, and was acceptable to most participants, it did not improve health or well-being and was not cost-effective.

What does this mean?

We do not recommend that the Home-based Older People's Exercise programme should be provided as extended rehabilitation for older people with frailty after discharge home from hospital or short-term rehabilitation services.

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This article

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