

## GAPS IN THE RESEARCH

During the development of this guideline, the systematic literature search was unable to identify a body of research in the following areas sufficient to answer the questions. This may have been because there was little or no published evidence addressing the specific questions being asked, or because the evidence that was identified was of insufficient quality upon which to base recommendations. In most cases, there was very little New Zealand-based research, although there are several studies currently underway which should provide more information.

Specifically, the team found there was:

- a need to develop some standard terminology to describe and define frequently used terms in the area of assessment of older people. Terms covering the types of assessments and the groups of people (with levels of complexity of needs) were misleadingly variable
- no systematic evaluation or comparison of effectiveness of assessment programmes in New Zealand
- insufficient evidence about the potential harms to older people in the process of assessment for needs (which may include under- or over-assessment, lack of follow-up, waiting times, misrepresentation of needs, or other unknown harms)
- a need for research on the relative effectiveness of targeted screening and population screening
- a need for more research (as opposed to opinion pieces) on what older people themselves want from an assessment programme, and whether being guided by such consumer preferences increases the effectiveness of the assessment
- not enough research to be able to identify who are the most effective people to do multidimensional assessments – that is, what specific qualifications, training and/or skill-set the assessor should have, whether they should be from a particular discipline, and if so, which etc
- not enough research directly comparing the relative effectiveness of different locations, settings and timings for assessment
- a need for systematic research on the particular needs of older Māori, Pacific peoples, and other groups of older people in New Zealand
- a need for quantitative research on the particular needs from assessment as they age, of people with pre-existing disabilities, both congenital and those acquired earlier in life
- a need for more clarity about whether assessment of carers is most effective when linked with assessment of the care recipient, or if there are other triggers for carer assessment that would be more effective
- a need for testing of the applicability of screening and assessment tools to the New Zealand setting
- a need to develop or modify screening and assessment tools for the New Zealand setting
- no screening and/or assessment tool that exactly matched the identified criteria
- limited information about the validity, inter-rater reliability, acceptability, specificity and sensitivity of screening and assessment tools
- insufficient information about whether an assessment should be a single process from screening to the more in-depth assessment, or discrete assessments along the continuum of care
- a need for research exploring the reasons for the apparent reluctance of health care professionals in overseas studies to follow the recommendations of a multidimensional assessment, and to consider the extent to which this could be an issue in New Zealand

- not enough information to reliably determine the cost in New Zealand of multidimensional assessment processes of the type outlined in this guideline, or the timescales over which costs could reasonably expect to be recouped.

Although somewhat beyond the scope of this guideline, when looking at recommendations for implementation, the guideline development process also revealed that there is:

- no research specifically looking at the impact of the structure of the New Zealand health care system on the needs of older people in New Zealand
- a lack of information about how the different sectors involved in providing for the needs of older people in New Zealand, such as health care and social services, could effectively create an intersectoral collaboration; and what modifications to existing services would be necessary.