Session: Health and health inequalities at older ages.

Title: Mortality in Old Age: an investigation in the Medical Research Council's Cognitive Function and Ageing Study (MRC CFAS).

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Background and purpose of research: This paper details the examination of psychosocial risk factors associated with mortality in the 65 year old and over population within the MRC CFAS. MRC CFAS is a population representative community study of the over 65 population in six centres in England and Wales.

Data and methods: Data on cognitive function, activities of daily living, social networks, demographic variables and risk factors for dementia have been collected in three waves over six years. All participants were flagged for mortality with ONS. This paper is based on the data from the five centres with identical methodology (East Cambridgeshire, Gwynedd, Newcastle, Nottingham and Oxford) and for the first two waves of the study.

Main results: Using the local Family Health Service Authorities lists as the sampling frame 20234 individuals were identified as potentially eligible for inclusion in the study. First wave interviews were successfully conducted with 13004 individuals and second wave with 8826 individuals. Twelve per cent of the sample died between interviews. Multivariate modelling using stepwise logistic regression showed an increased risk of mortality with increasing age, decreasing cognition, increased problems with activities of daily living, poor self-reported health (particularly for men) and smoked. Those who died were more likely to be in a residential home (18% in deceased at wave 2 compared with 3% in respondents).

Conclusions: Between the first and second waves of this study predictors for mortality were increased age, being male, being impaired for activities of daily living, having poor self perceived health, being a smoker and having poor cognitive ability. Is this the survival of the fittest?