

Uncovering Hidden Frailty : A Focus on Multiple Sclerosis

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Aims and Objectives

Brief overview of
Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Hidden frailty in MS

Why it's important not
to miss frailty in MS
and other long term
neurological conditions

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What is MS?

- Neuro condition affecting the CNS
- Damage to the myelin and nerve fibres leads to interruption of signal
- Symptoms dependent on area of CNS which is damaged
- Affects over 150,000 people in the UK (1 in every 400 people), with nearly 7,100 new diagnoses each year (MS Society, May 2024)
- Number of people with MS growing by 2.4% each year
- Typically affects younger adults; disproportionately women under 40
- Can present with attacks of rapid onset neuro dysfunction and/or with progressive accumulation of disability.

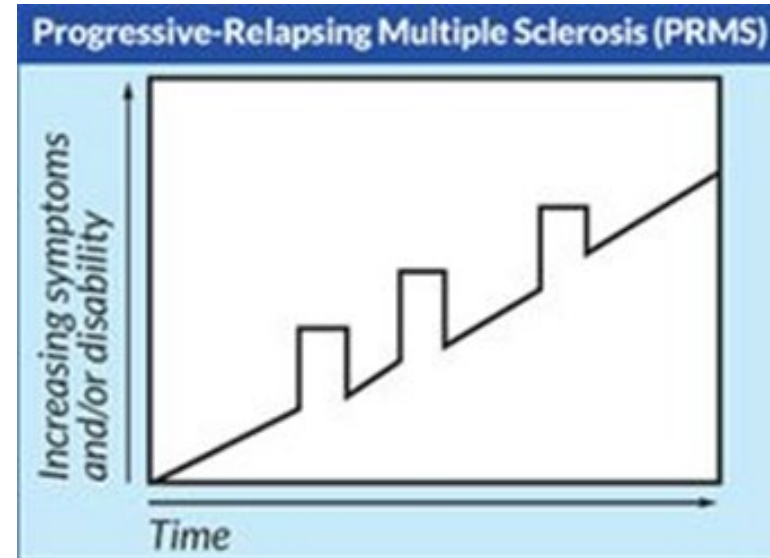
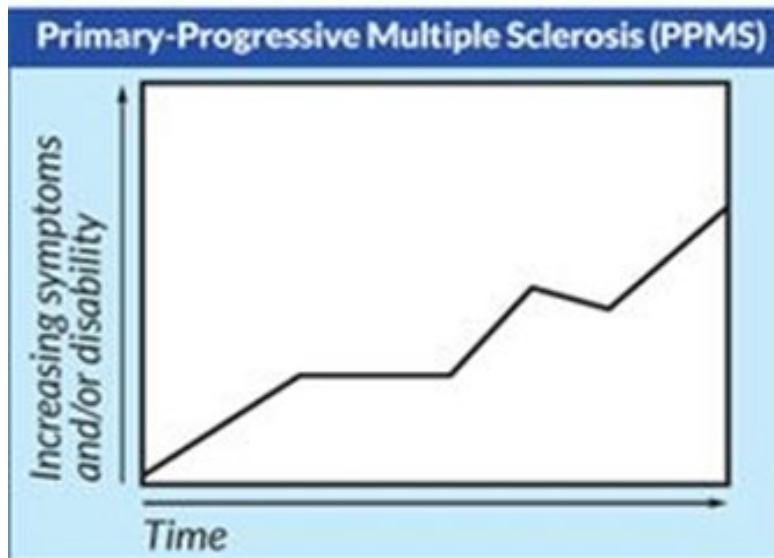
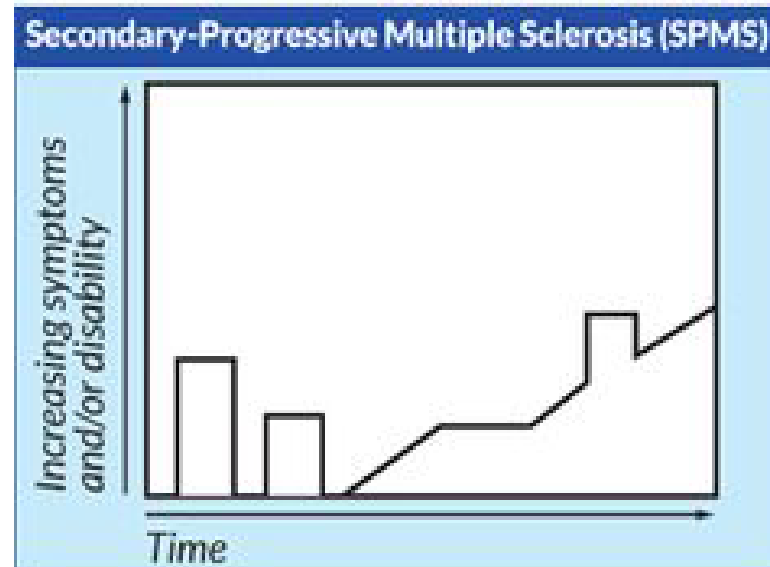
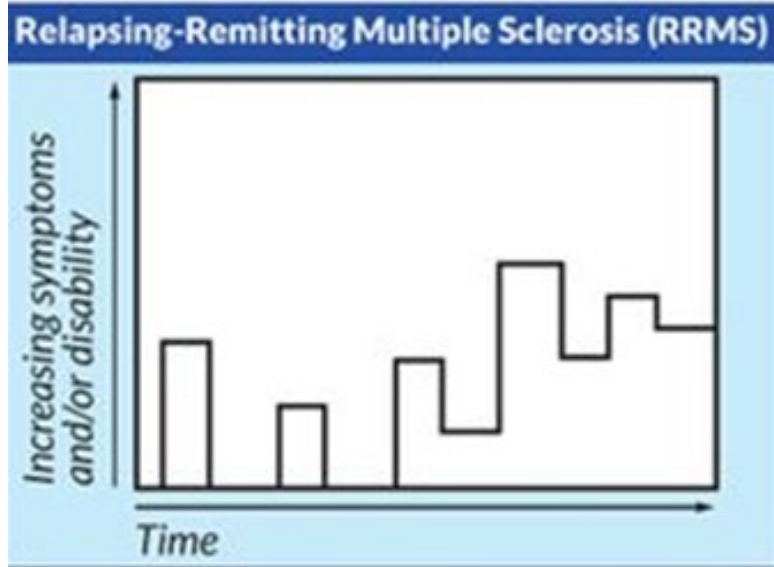
What causes MS?

- It is not known exactly what causes MS, but it's thought to be a combination of factors that trigger MS
- Most accepted theory is that MS is an autoimmune disorder

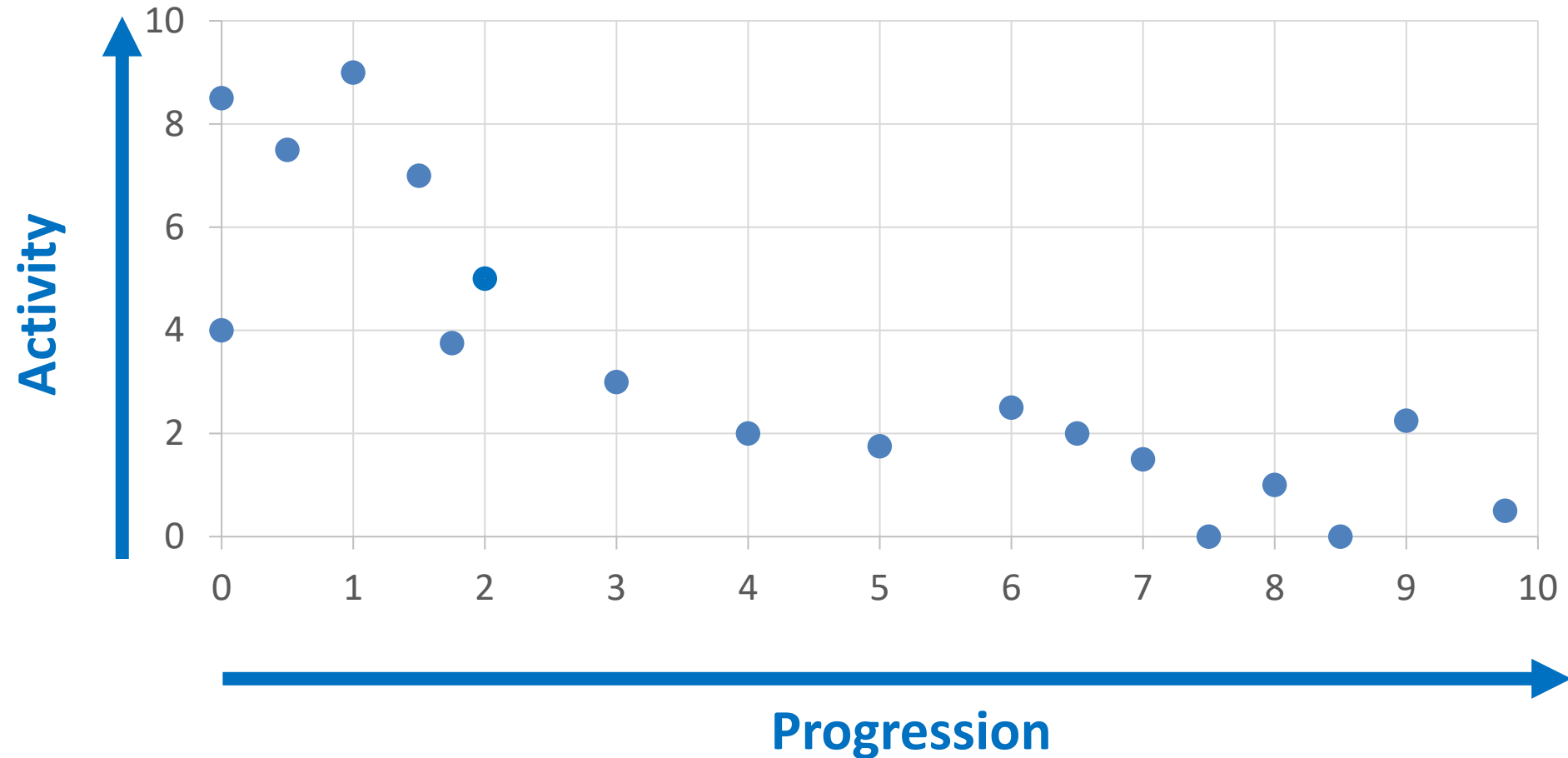
Risk Factors

- Genetics
- Geography
- Vitamin D
- Viruses/Epstein Barr Virus (EBV)
- Smoking
- Obesity

Traditional Types of MS



The way MS is thought about is changing



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Disability Levels in MS

MS Expanded Disability Status Score (EDSS)



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THE TRUTH BEHIND INVISIBLE ILLNESS

WHAT YOU SEE



WHAT YOU DON'T SEE

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Dynamic visualisation of MS disease course



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Frailty

“

An age-related syndrome of physiological decline, characterised by marked vulnerability to adverse health outcomes.

JD Walston, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

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“

Describes someone's overall resilience and how this relates and their ability to 'bounce back' after illness or injury.

Age UK

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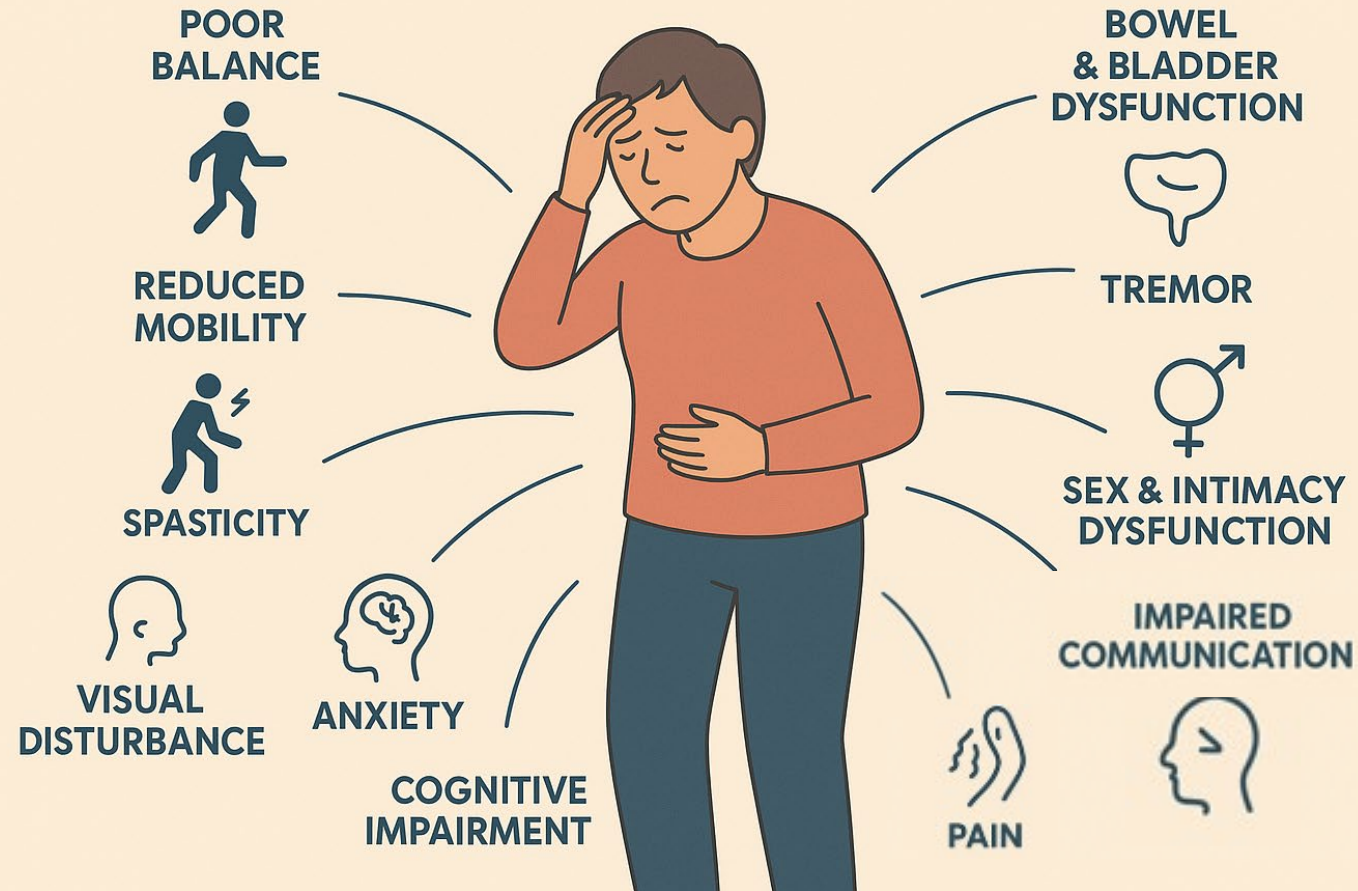
It is important to understand the difference between frailty, long term conditions and disability. Many people with multiple long-term conditions will also have frailty which may be masked when the focus is on other disease based long term conditions.

British Geriatrics Society

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MS SYMPTOMS

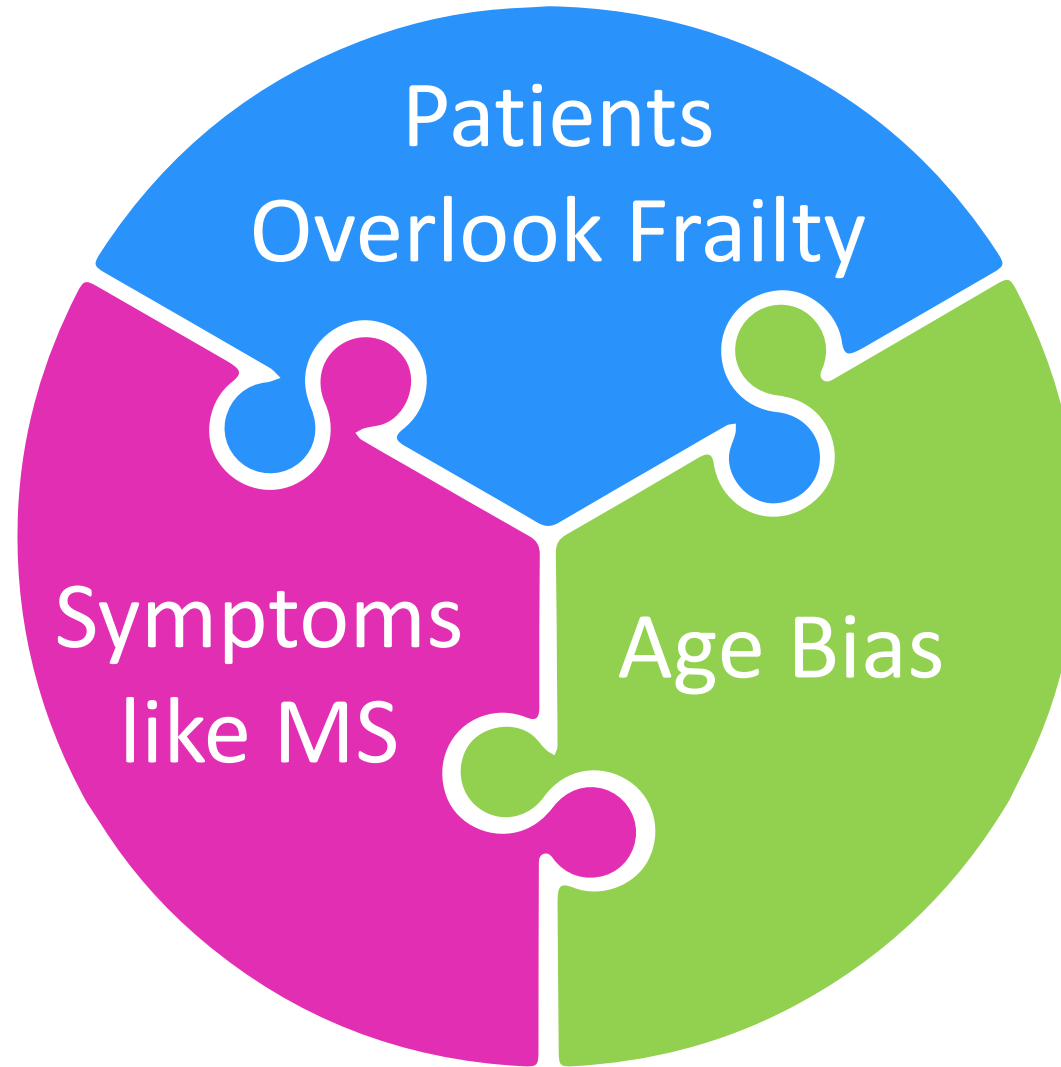


MS symptoms depend on the area(s) of the brain or spinal cord affected

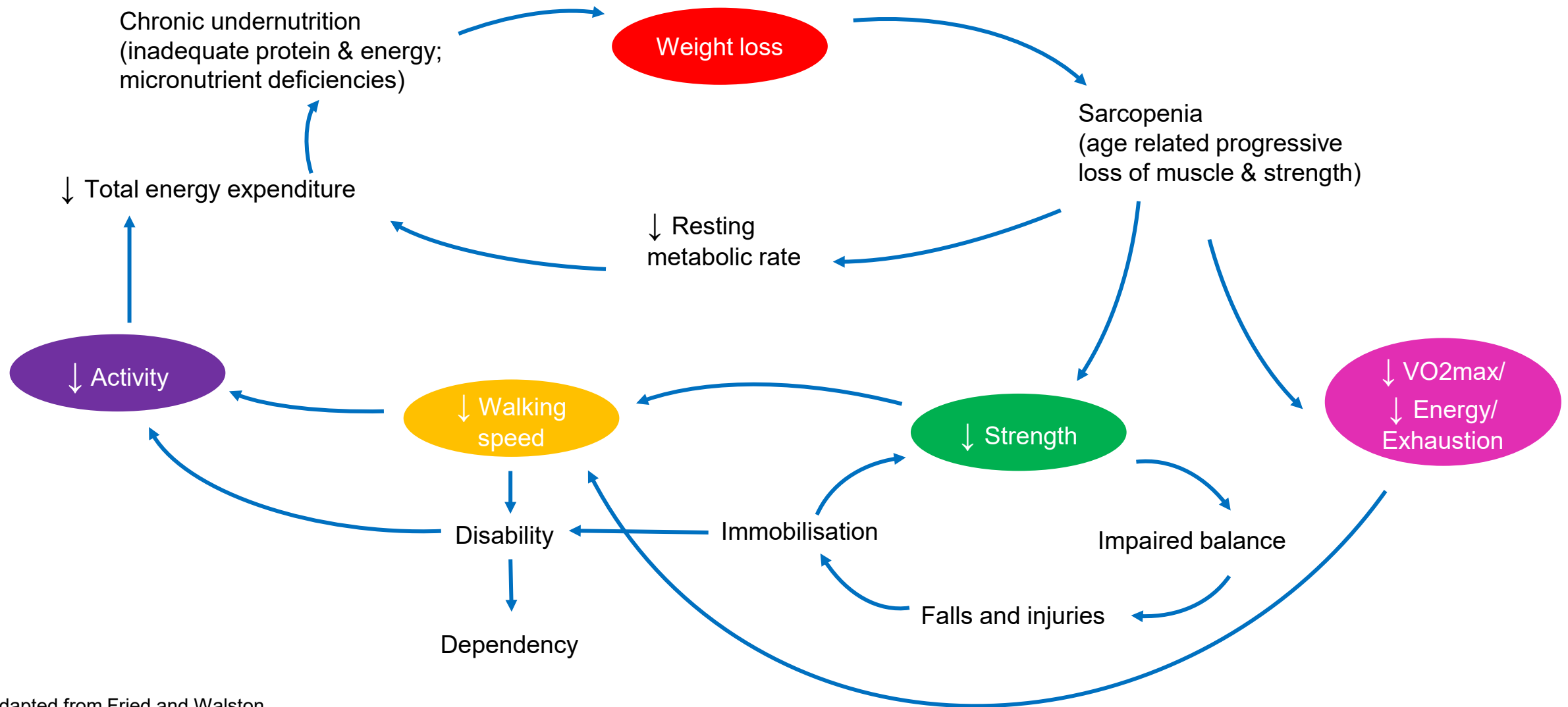
reduced strength
impaired balance
reduced activity
reduced mental alertness
Frailty or MS?
incontinence
no energy
falls
reduced walking speed
reduced grip
reduced function
immobility
fatigue

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Why is Frailty in MS Overlooked?



Cycle of Frailty



Adapted from Fried and Walston

Consequences of Missing Frailty

Missed frailty means missed chances

- More falls and hospitalisation
- Faster decline
- Worse outcomes
- Reduced quality of life

Overlooking frailty means more than missing a diagnosis it's a missed chance to slow deterioration, avoid complications, and enhance quality of life

Thinking Ahead – Recognise Early, Act Early

Think
Proactive
Not
Reactive

Diet, nutrition,
and hydration

Weight (and
weight loss)

Energy levels

Muscle strength

Balance

Mobility, falls,
and falls risk

Bone health

Activity and
function

Independence/
dependence

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Known Modifiable Factors for Healthy Ageing



Staying active and exercise



Getting enough (and good quality) sleep



Not smoking



Proactively managing health

- Managing health conditions well
- *Managing MS symptoms well*
- Taking recommended medication
- Having recommended health screening
- Having recommended vaccinations
- Managing stress



Making healthy food choices



Limiting alcohol intake



Having meaningful relationships and social contact

Age UK

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Key Takeaways



MS symptoms often resemble frailty – early recognition is essential



Frailty may develop earlier in MS and other progressive neurological conditions



Cycle of frailty can accelerate decline if not addressed



Missing frailty signs risks missed intervention opportunities



Proactive early intervention prevents deterioration, and maintains function and quality of life



Healthy aging is modifiable – through activity, nutrition, and social engagement

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Thank you for listening

Any questions or comments?

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