

Research Agenda for the Mobility Screen

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To support the goal of the Mobility Screen becoming the standard of care and a reimbursable service, the APTA Geriatrics Mobility Screen Task Force developed a research agenda that will examine the long-term benefits of the Mobility Screen on overall health, functional independence and downstream healthcare costs. The research agenda builds upon and will add to the current foundational research within the literature. To move the Mobility Screen from a concept to reality, measurement and demonstration of the validity, reliability, efficacy, practicality, perceptions, implications, and long-term effects of the screen as a whole should be prioritized. The Task Force has created a list of the top research priorities with sample-specific research questions for each priority.

Perceptions of the Mobility Screen

- How do middle-aged and older adults who complete the Mobility Screen feel about the time needed to complete it, the usefulness of the results, recommendations from the screen, and the overall experience of the visit?
- How do physical therapists who conduct the Mobility Screen feel about the time commitment to complete it, the questions and tools included, the usefulness of the results, and the practicality of its use in clinical practice?
- How do participants and potential payors perceive information from the Mobility Screen as different from and complementing the Medicare Wellness Visit?

Implementation of the Mobility Screen

- What are the costs in terms of time and resources to conduct the Mobility Screen?
- Can some measures be eliminated due to collinearity to make the screen more efficient? Should other questions/tests be added to improve the screen's psychometric properties?
- What are the factors that facilitate potential participants to want to participate in and complete the Mobility Screen. What are the reasons and barriers that potential participants do not want to or cannot complete the Mobility Screen?
- What are the facilitators and barriers to implementing the Mobility Screen in different settings (i.e., outpatient clinics, senior living facilities, assisted living settings, health fairs, community events, home setting, virtual visit)?
- How can our profession ensure equitable access to the Mobility Screen across geographic regions, socioeconomic levels, underserved populations, and living environments?
- How should the screen be adapted to account for the diversity of adults, especially those living with health disparities?
- How will the Mobility Screen be integrated with the Welcome to Medicare Visit?

Short-Term Impact of the Mobility Screen

- Which questions and tools in the Mobility Screen relate to or help predict a mobility disability or adverse event?
- Can a composite score using multiple measures from the screen better predict future outcomes?
- What are the most effective recommendations based on the results of the Mobility Screen?

- Can a composite score from the multiple measurement tools be used to guide interventions and recommendations?
- What factors predict participants' follow-through on recommendations from the Mobility Screen?
- What factors determine if participants will return the following year for a repeat of the Mobility Screen?

Long-Term Impact of Mobility Screen

- Does the Mobility Screen and follow up recommendations lead to better long-term mobility, improved health outcomes, and/or fewer adverse events in those who complete it versus those who do not?
- Over repeated testing, do Mobility Screen outcome scores improve for those who implement the recommendations?
- Does the Mobility Screen demonstrate economic value to participants, providers, and/or payors?

The Mobility Screen could potentially improve the health of older adults, increase access to services, and lower the costs for participants and payors. The Task Force believes these priorities are consistent with multiple aims of the APTA Geriatrics Research Agenda¹ and the Research Agenda for Physical Therapy² and the Mobility Screen contribute to the profession's vision of optimizing movement to improve the human experience. For all these reasons, investigators could make a strong case for seeking funding from various sources to answer these and other questions.

The Task Force has discussed the methodology that could be used to help answer these questions. See Table 2 for some of these ideas. The research areas and methodology are suggestions, and the Task Force acknowledges there are other ways the Mobility Screen could be studied.

Potential Research Designs for Mobility Screen

- Using large data sets already in place from large healthcare systems or managed care organizations to retrospectively look at the relationship between performance measures and adverse events.
- Use an Implementation Science framework, such as the RE-AIM Framework or Precede-Proceed Model, to examine the effects of the Mobility Screen on participants' health and mobility.
- Set up a registry where data from physical therapists could be submitted and reviewed.
- Work with Medicare Advantage Programs or Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) to pilot the Mobility Screen in individuals at high risk for a mobility disability.
- Integration of the Mobility Screen into an EMR system to allow a retrospective review of the trends and relationships between the screen and adverse events.

Next Steps

The Mobility Screen and supporting documents are now available on the APTA Geriatrics website. The Task Force encourages physical therapists to review this material and implement the screen in their clinical settings and through health fairs and community outreach. The Task Force also sees a place for physical therapy education programs to implement the screen as part of a community outreach program or through pro bono clinics. The Task Force encourages those with a research background to study the Mobility Screen. The Task Force also acknowledges that many have done and are currently doing research that can help answer some of the questions about the Mobility Screen.

For those interested in research or are currently doing research that would address questions around the Mobility Screen, the Task Force is collecting names and will be setting up a discussion group to facilitate sharing of ideas through the APTA Geriatrics website.

Task Force members will be presenting on the Mobility Screen at national and regional conferences, hosting webinars and using other forms of communication and marketing to spread the message. As feedback is collected and research studies are conducted, the Task Force will reexamine the format of the Mobility Screen and associated tools to see if there are any adjustments needed.

The Task Force views this initiative as a profession-wide priority that can improve the health and mobility of our patients and clients. We are excited to advocate and support an annual mobility screen focused on empowering individuals to move, engage and live well.

References

1. APTA Geriatrics Board of Directors. APTA Geriatrics: Research Agenda. 2020; <https://aptageriatrics.org/pdfs/APTA-Geriatrics-Research-Agenda-Feb2020.pdf>. Accessed June 19, 2024.
2. Stevens-Lapsley J, Hicks GE, Zimney K, Slaven EJ, Manal TJ, Jeffries LM. Research Agenda for Physical Therapy From the American Physical Therapy Association. *Phys Ther*. 2023;103(10).