



Rachel R. Deer, PhD

**UTMB RESEARCHERS
HELP OLDER PATIENTS
RECOVER BETTER**

PRESS RELEASE
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A new paper in the Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences shows potential new ways to speed up recovery from the hospital. UTMB researchers, led by Elena Volpi, MD, PhD, tried different strategies to boost the function of older adults hospitalized for an acute illness.

All interventions resulted in better function 1 month after hospital discharge, and, possibly, fewer returns to the hospital.

In this Phase I trial, 100 older adults received different treatments for the 30 days after hospital discharge, a crucial time for recovery from hospitalization. Treatments included a whey protein supplement, a sugar supplement (placebo), in-home rehabilitation, whey protein supplement plus in-home rehabilitation, or testosterone. Those who received any treatment improved their physical function and had a lower rate of return to the hospital than those taking placebo.

The paper, entitled “A Phase I Randomized Clinical Trial of Evidence-Based, Pragmatic Interventions to Improve Functional Recovery After Hospitalization in Geriatric Patients” was written by Rachel R. Deer, Jacques Baillargeon, Steven R. Fisher, Mukaila Raji, and Elena Volpi. It is available online from the Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30906944>.

Lead author Rachel R. Deer, PhD is an Assistant Professor, Division of Rehabilitation Sciences at UTMB. She also has appointments in the Division of Nutrition and Metabolism and the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. Dr. Deer is an RL5 Scholar in the UTMB Claude D. Pepper Older American Independence Center. Her research focuses on interventions to accelerate functional recovery from hospitalization in older adults.

Senior author Elena Volpi, MD, PhD is an internationally renowned expert in clinical and translational research on muscle and physical function in older adults. She is also a practicing geriatric endocrinologist. Dr. Volpi is a Brookdale National Fellow (class 2000), and has been funded by the NIH without interruption over the last 20 years. She has been the chair of the NIH Aging Systems and Geriatrics study section, a standing member of other NIH study sections (NIA-C, CIDO), and associate editor of the journal Clinical Nutrition. Dr. Volpi holds the Daisy Emery Allen Distinguished Chair in Geriatric Medicine and is Director of the Sealy Center on Aging and the UTMB Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center. She is the Associate Director of the UTMB Institute for Translational Sciences. Dr. Volpi is a Professor with appointments in the Departments of Internal Medicine-Geriatrics; Neurology; Neuroscience and Cell Biology; and Nutrition and Metabolism at UTMB. She earned her MD and PhD degrees from the University of Perugia, Italy.

The Sealy Center on Aging has provided leading aging care since 1995. The Center focuses on improving the health and well-being of the elderly through interdisciplinary research, education, and community service by integrating the resources and activities relevant to aging at UTMB. The Center also implements our research findings in hospitals and clinics, bringing excellence and visibility to our health care system, and improving the health of our seniors.

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