THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORT AND FEAR OF COVID-19 AMONG OLDER ADULTS
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Public health concerns related to the COVID-19 health crisis are particularly salient among older adults. Fear surrounding COVID-19 has also been associated with increased spread, morbidity, and mortality of the disease. Prior to the pandemic, loneliness and social isolation were already a concern for older adults, and the pandemic further constrained how older adults may socially connect with others because of public health safety precautions. Online social networks are a valuable form of support for older adults, and usage of online social networks during the pandemic may have expanded. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the association between online social networks and fear of COVID-19 among older adults. A convenience sample (n = 239) of adults 60+ years of age in the U.S. completed a 20-minute, online survey. The independent variable utilized the Lubben Social Network Scale (four items), focusing on online support. The dependent variable was measured by the Fear of COVID-19 scale (eight items). Results of ordinary least squares regression show that increased online social network support was significantly associated with decreased fear of COVID-19 (p < 0.05), while holding constant age, sex, race, marital status, education, whether a respondent lives alone, and self-rated health. Findings highlight the importance of online social networks for older adults during the COVID-19 crisis. Existing online networks which engage older adults should be expanded, and efforts should be made to provide older adults with online forms of social support who may experience barriers or inequities related to accessing technology.

Session 3120 (Symposium)
STEP-HI STUDY: A MULTIMODAL INTERVENTION OF EXERCISE AND TESTOSTERONE THERAPY: DESIGN AND REAL-WORLD CHALLENGES
Chair: Ellen Binder Discussant: Jay Magaziner

Hip fractures are common among older women and can have a devastating impact on their ability to remain independent. Many women who were high functioning before the hip fracture do not return to their pre-fracture level of function, have persistent weakness and mobility impairments, and may require ongoing supportive services. Age-associated androgen deficiency may contribute to deficits in muscle mass, strength and power that are common in older female hip fracture patients. The Starting a Testosterone and Exercise Program after Hip Injury (STEP-HI ) Study is a three-group, randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled Phase III clinical trial designed to evaluate a multi-modal intervention aimed at improving functional outcomes in older female hip fracture patients. 168 female hip fracture patients, age 65 yrs. and older are being recruited from 6 clinical sites in the USA. Participants are being assigned to one of three groups: supervised exercise (EX) plus 1% testosterone topical gel; EX plus placebo gel; or enhanced usual care. The primary outcome is six-minute walk distance. This symposium will present information related to key aspects of the design of the STEP-HI trial, including recruitment of a frail patient population during a period of injury recovery, the testosterone and exercise interventions and related fidelity procedures, and implementation challenges for this multi-modal intervention prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the underlying mechanisms by which testosterone and exercise are expected to have a synergistic effect on muscle strength and function will be discussed.

THE STEP-HI TRIAL: PRAGMATIC CHALLENGES AND DESIGN ISSUES
Ellen Binder, Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine, Saint Louis, Missouri, United States

Multi-modal interventions present many implementation challenges, especially for studies of frail older adults. The STEP-HI study is an ongoing multi-center, randomized, controlled, double-blinded clinical trial that is evaluating whether six months of topical testosterone therapy combined with a supervised center-based exercise-training program can improve mobility, functional performance, and quality of life after hip fracture, compared to exercise training alone or Enhanced Usual Care. Female hip fracture patients ≥ 65 yrs. old who are living in the community or assisted living are being randomized within 26 weeks of surgical repair for the fracture, and re-evaluated 24 weeks later. This presentation discusses the rationale and study design, and modifications to the protocol in response to challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR MULTIMODAL INTERVENTION TRIALS
Jenna Bartley, Center on Aging, Farmington, Connecticut, United States

Determining ways to improve hip fracture recovery in older adults is important, however recruitment of this target population into clinical trials is challenging. Multimodal interventions that target multiple mechanisms of recovery may improve outcomes, but each component presents unique recruitment barriers. While exercise interventions have been shown to be beneficial for hip fracture recovery, offering exercise following completion of conventional physical therapy can be viewed as a burdensome time commitment. Hormone replacement therapy may hold promise for overcoming anabolic resistance, but concern about adverse side effects can also deter participation. STEP-HI is a multisite trial testing whether exercise and testosterone can improve hip fracture recovery in older women. In this talk, recruitment barriers experienced in STEP-HI and strategies employed to overcome these barriers will be discussed. Strategies include: partnering with hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and orthopedic surgeons, providing talks and education materials; and featuring past participant testimonials in recruitment materials.

IMPLEMENTATION OF A REMOTE FIDELITY OVERSIGHT PROGRAM FOR A MULTI-SITE EXERCISE INTERVENTION
Jennifer Stevens-Lapsley, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, Colorado, United States

The STEP-HI exercise protocol is a supervised, 2 phase, multimodal, high-intensity exercise program that emphasizes resistance training. Exercise sessions are conducted at