

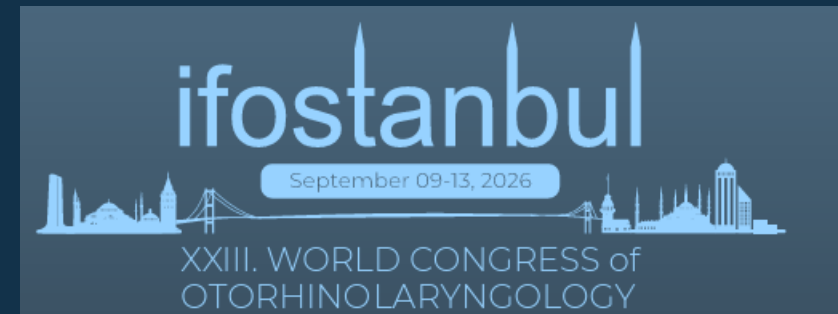
Natural History of

Unilateral Vocal Fold Paralysis

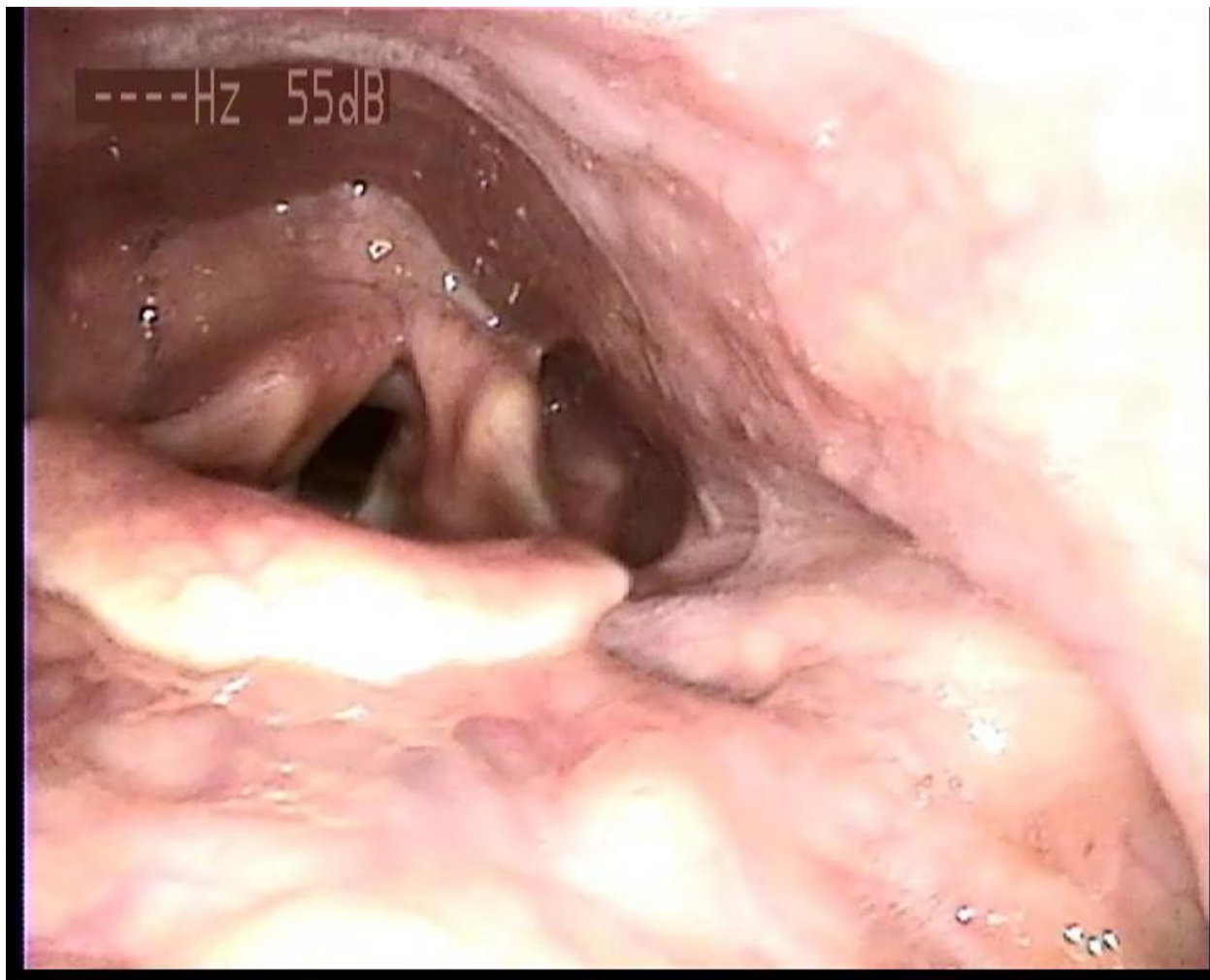
Impact on Treatment Decision-Making

Aude Lagier

CHU de Liège / ULiège



UVFP: What will happen next?

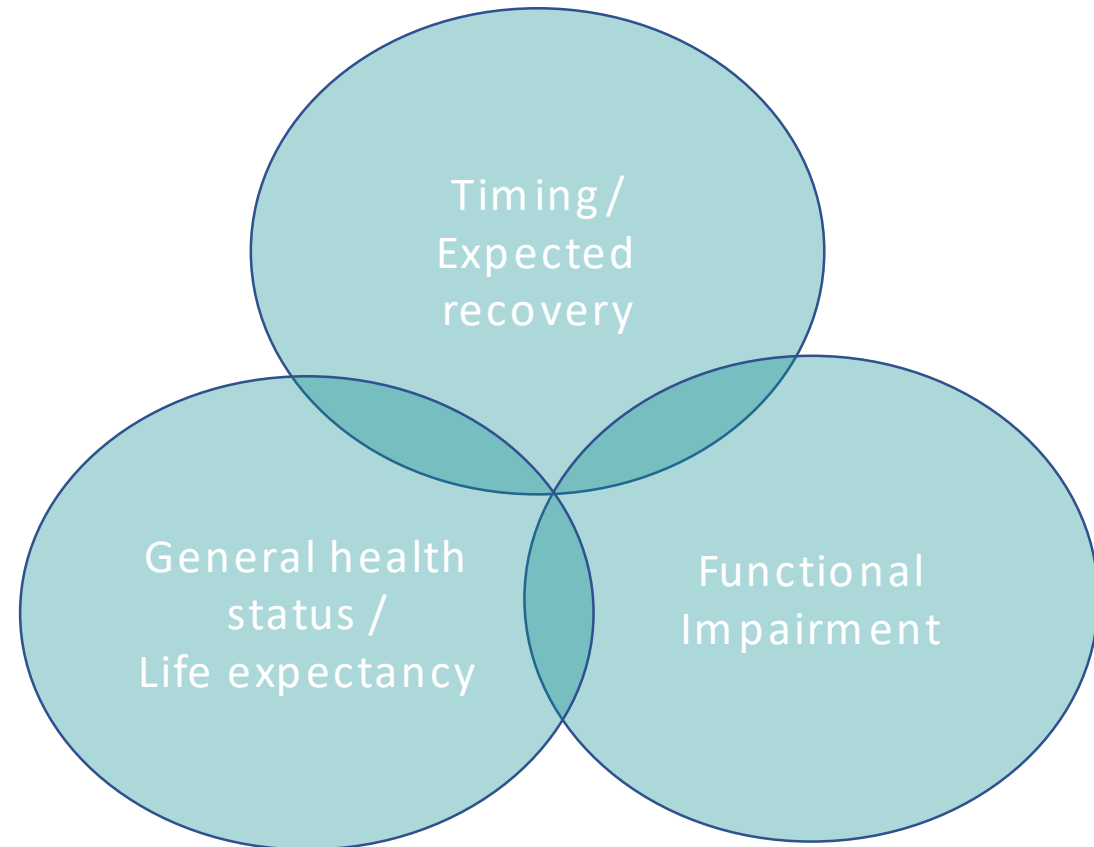


UVFP: What will happen next?

UVFP is a dynamic condition

The vocal fold is immobile today. Will it recover?

- Should I wait?
- Should I offer temporary treatment?
- Should I offer definitive treatment?

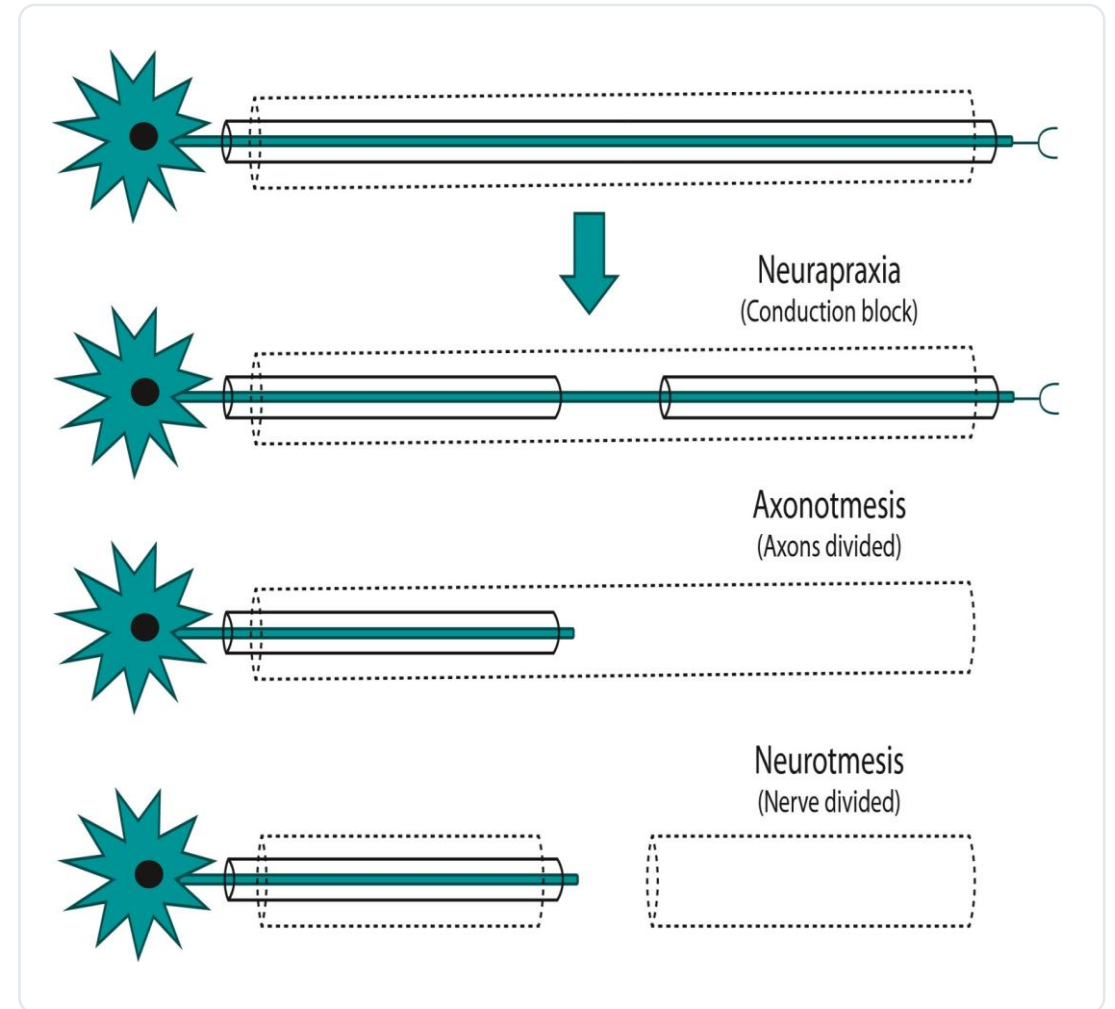


Not all nerve injuries are equal

Severity and site of injury determine the likelihood and timing of recovery

Milder injury (neurapraxia) → faster and more physiological recovery

Increasing structural injury →

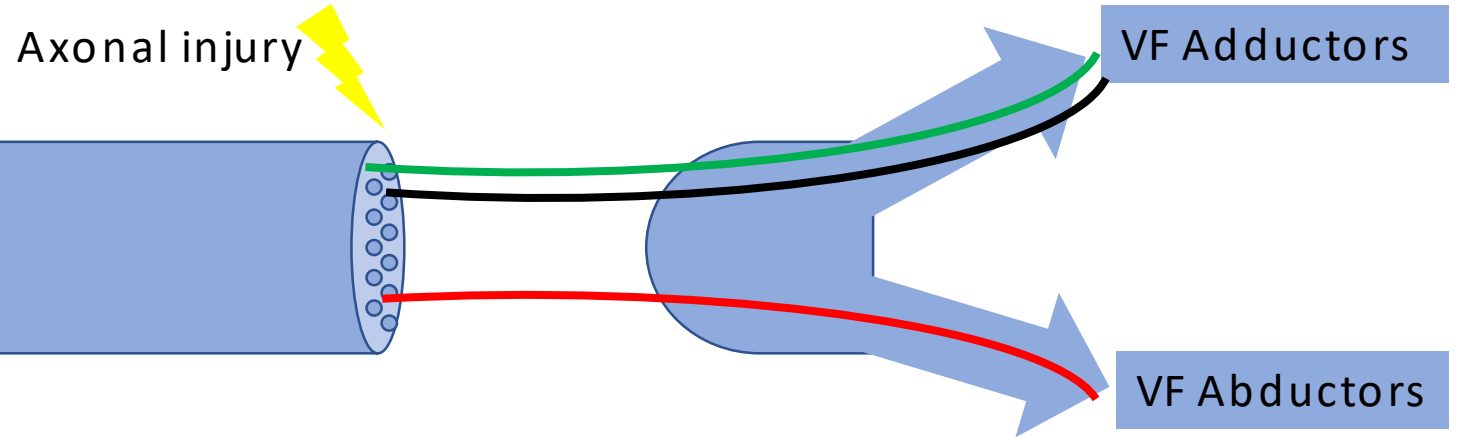


After axonal injury: regeneration ≠ restoration

Physiological regrowth

Targeted reinnervation

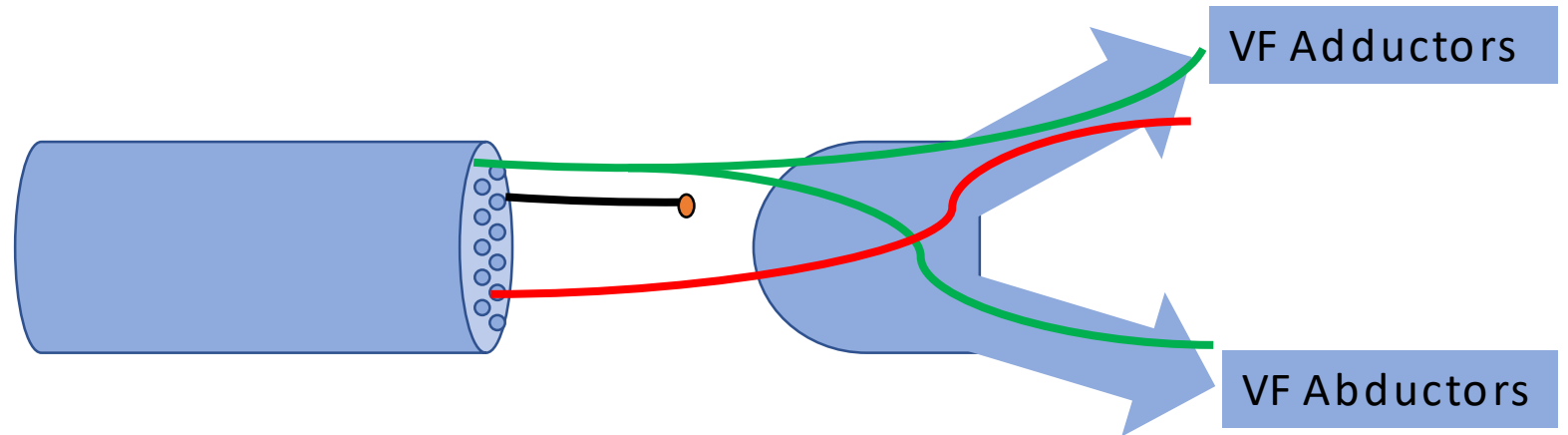
Restored function



Axonal sprouting / misdirection

Aberrant reinnervation

Synkinesis



Blocked axonal regrowth —

Axonal sprouting —

Axonal misdirection —

Key point Regeneration can be present without restoring normal mobility nor voice.

What does 'recovery' mean?

Nerve recovery

electrical / trophic reinnervation

≠

Motion recovery

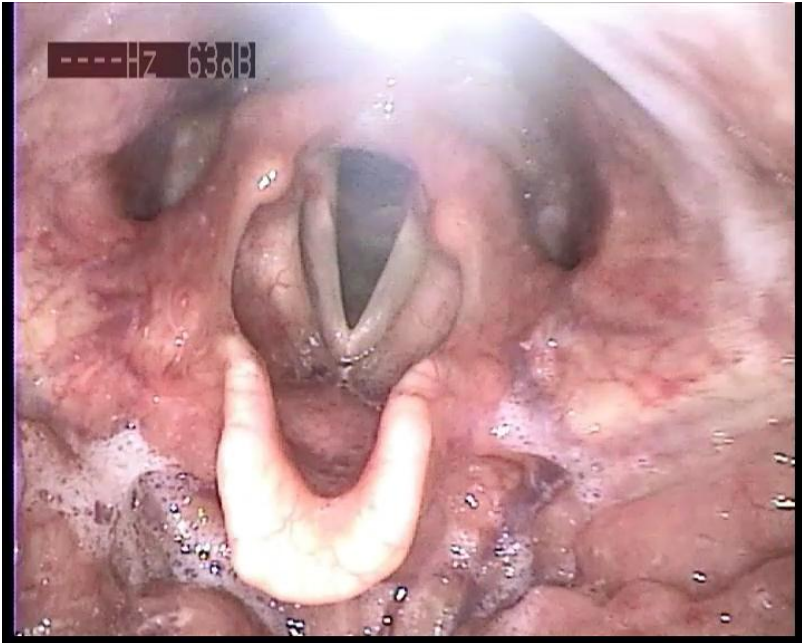
return of visible vocal fold mobility

≠

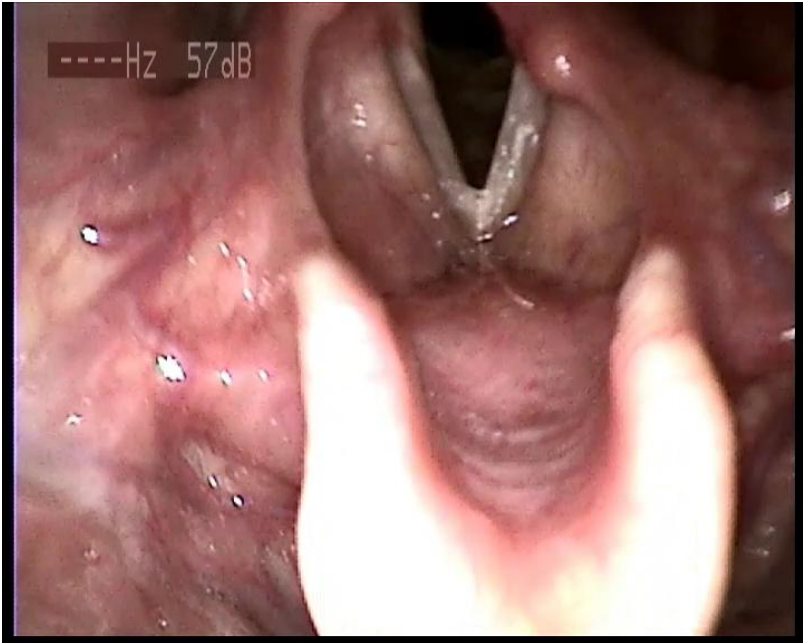
Voice recovery

functional glottal competence

04/10/2026 pre-op ansa cervicalis–RLN anastomosis



05/20/2026 Post-op day 10

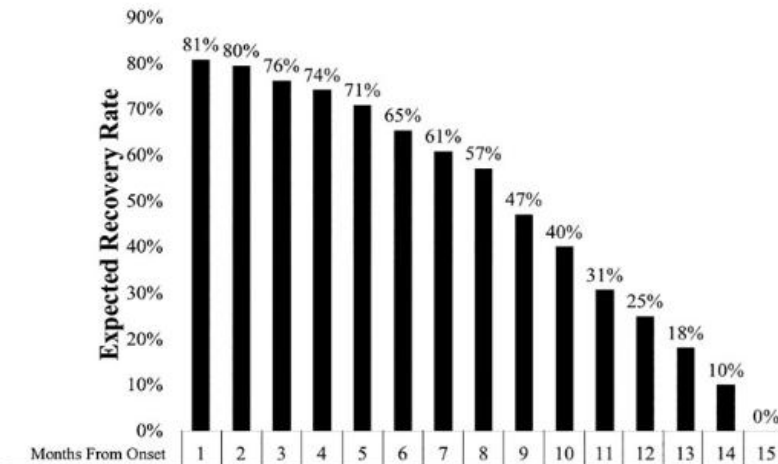


Recovery is time-dependent

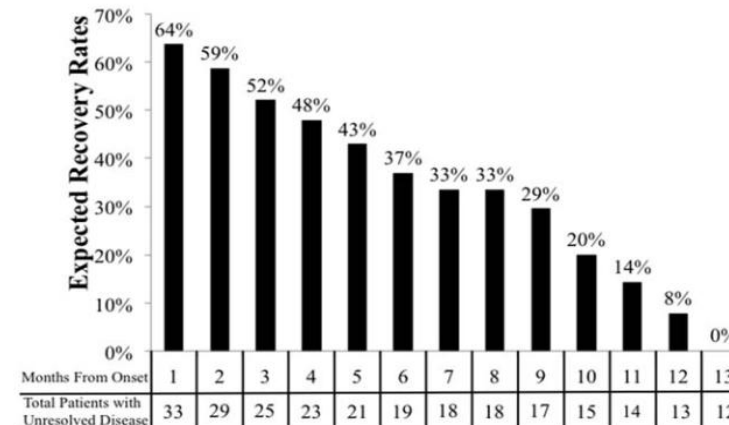
Most spontaneous recovery occurs within the first 12 months

The longer the paralysis remains unresolved, the lower the probability of spontaneous recovery.

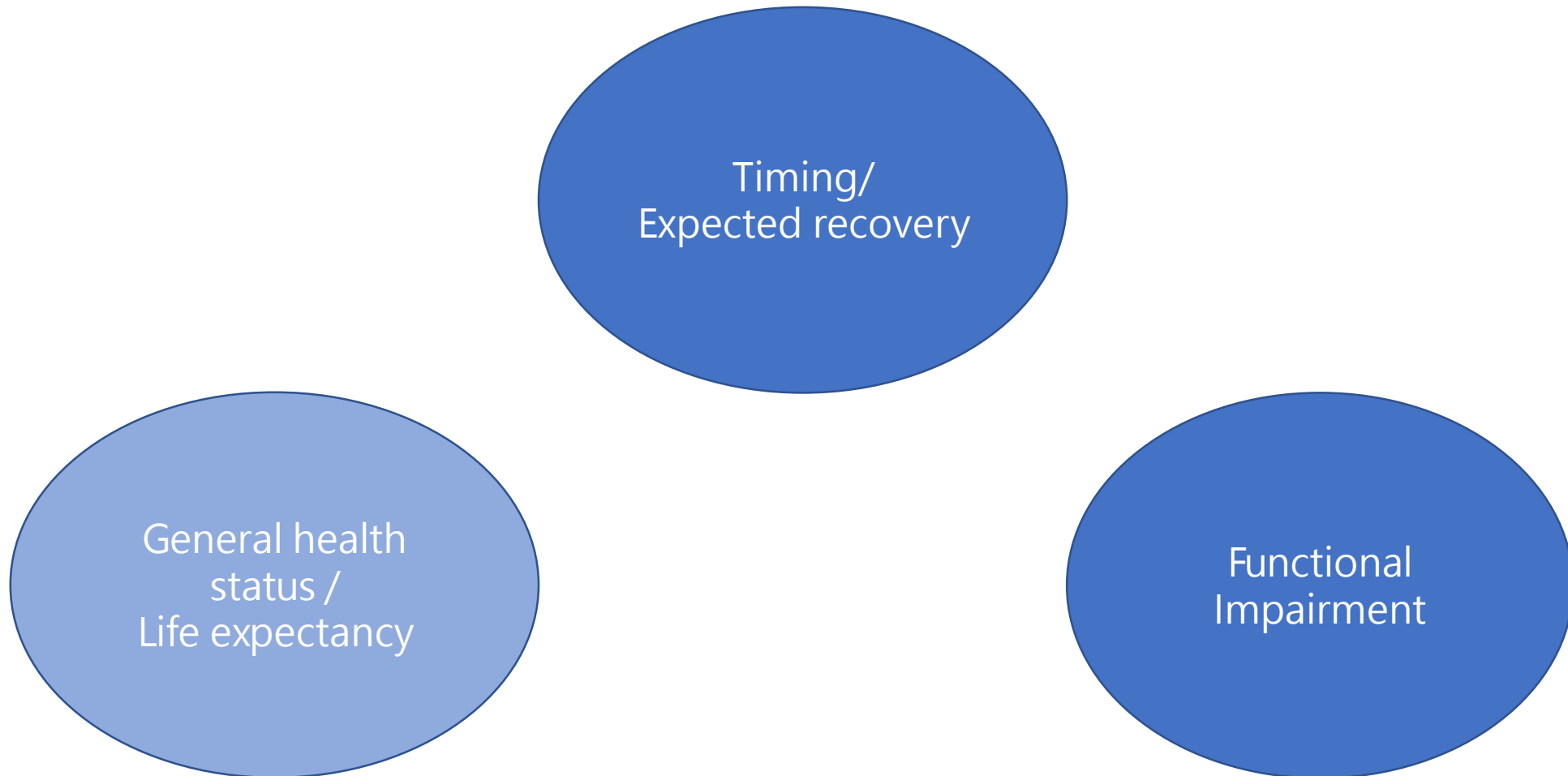
Iatrogenic UVFP



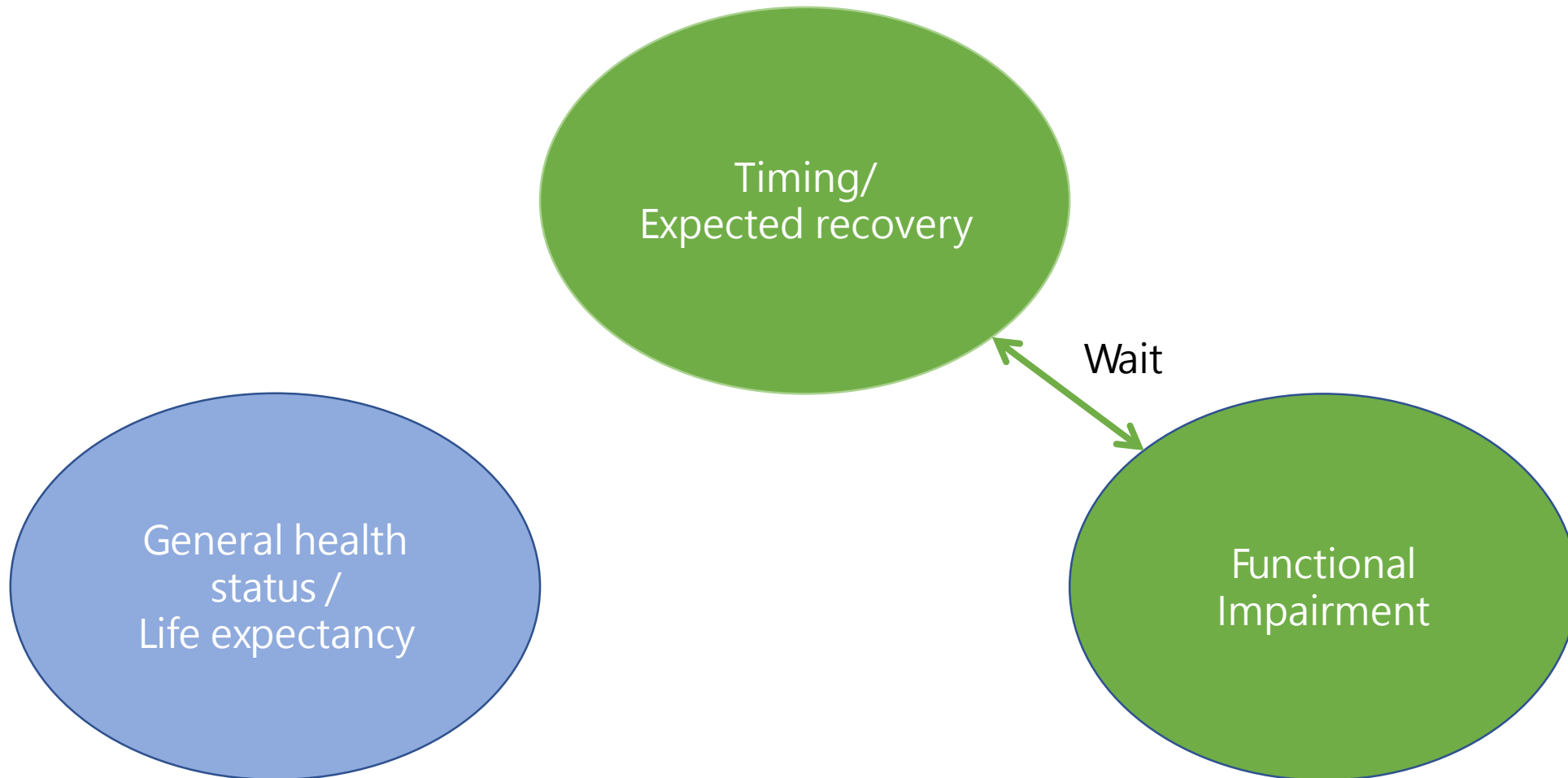
Idiopathic UVFP



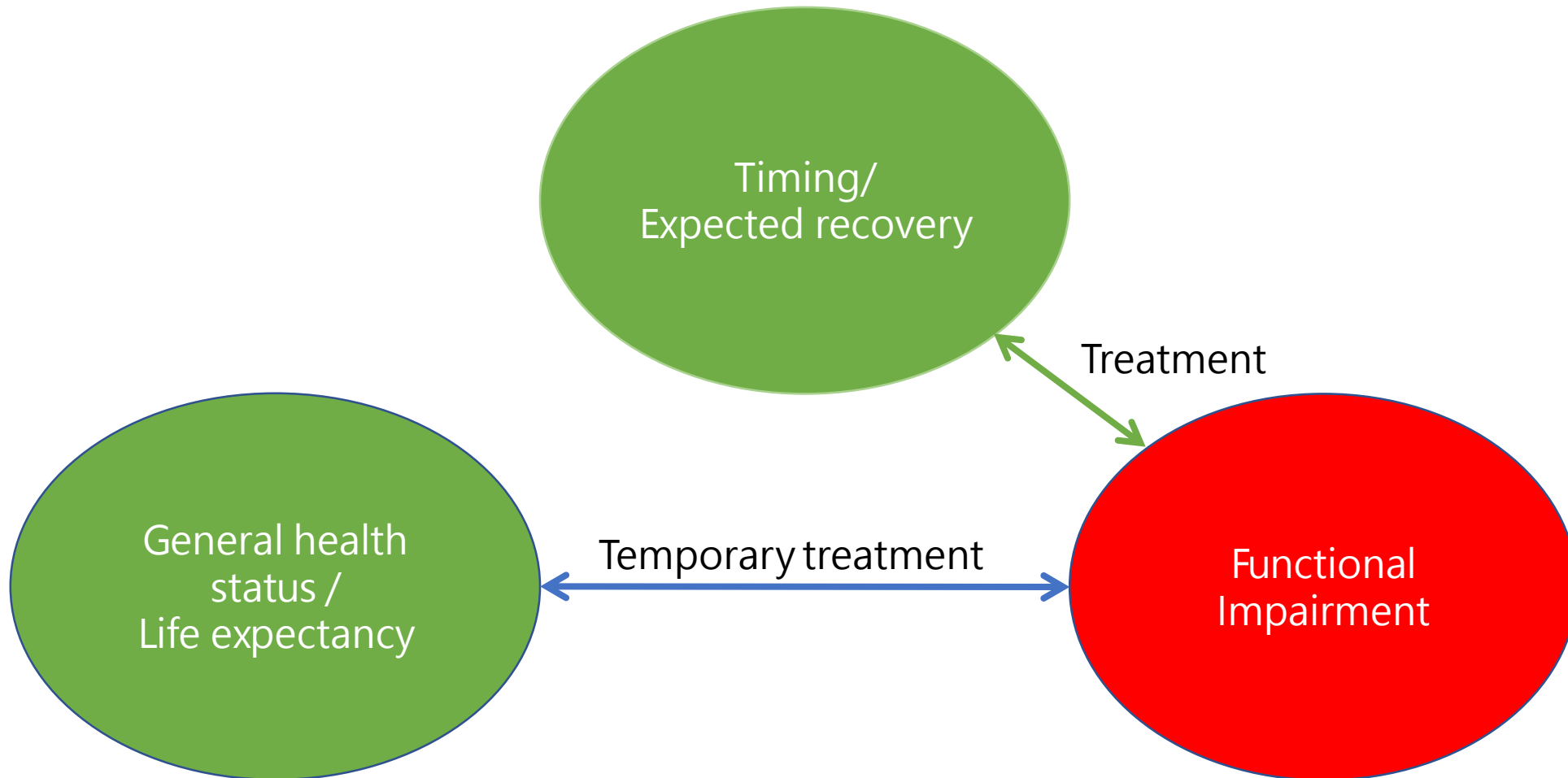
Impact on decision-making



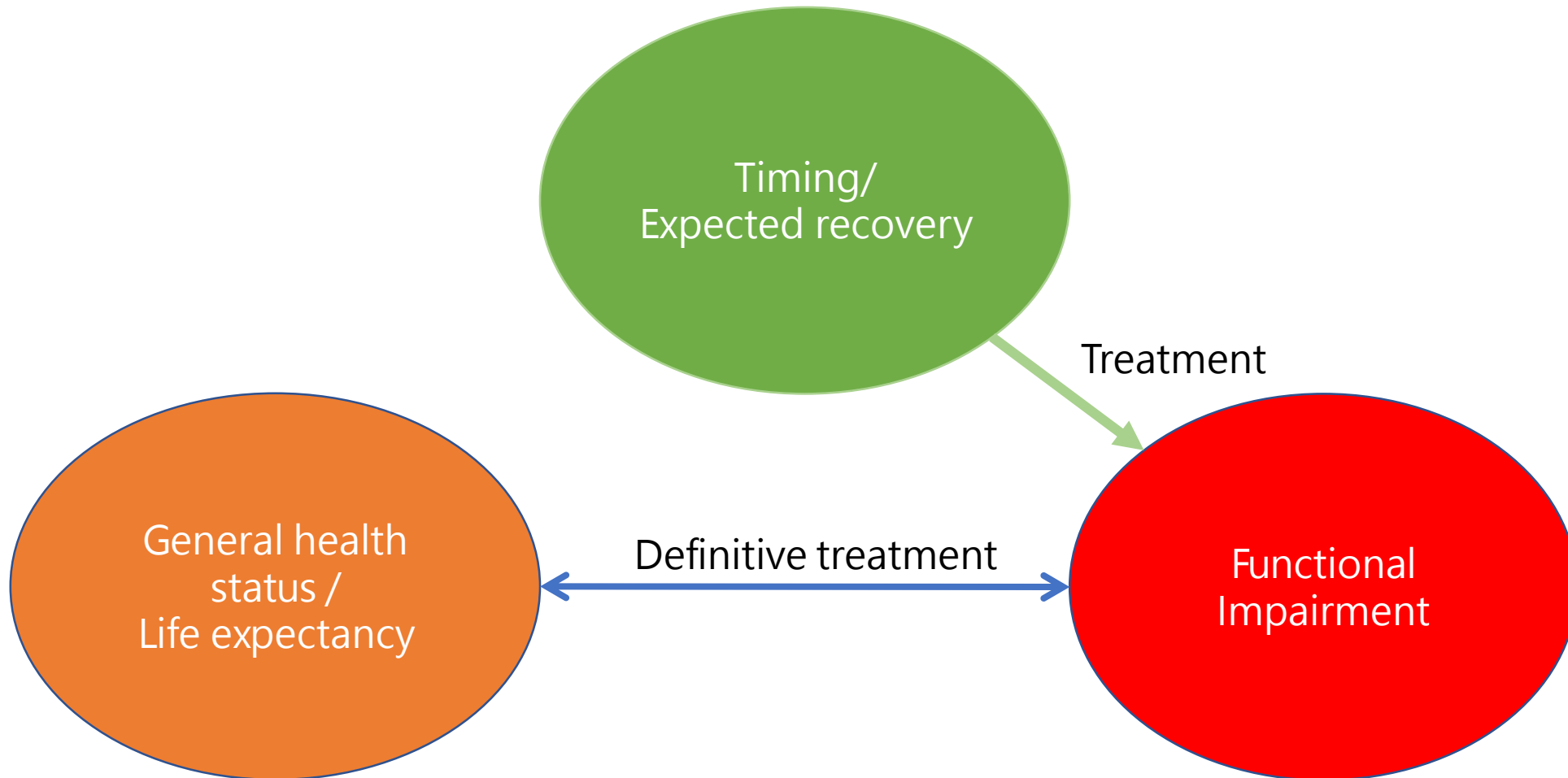
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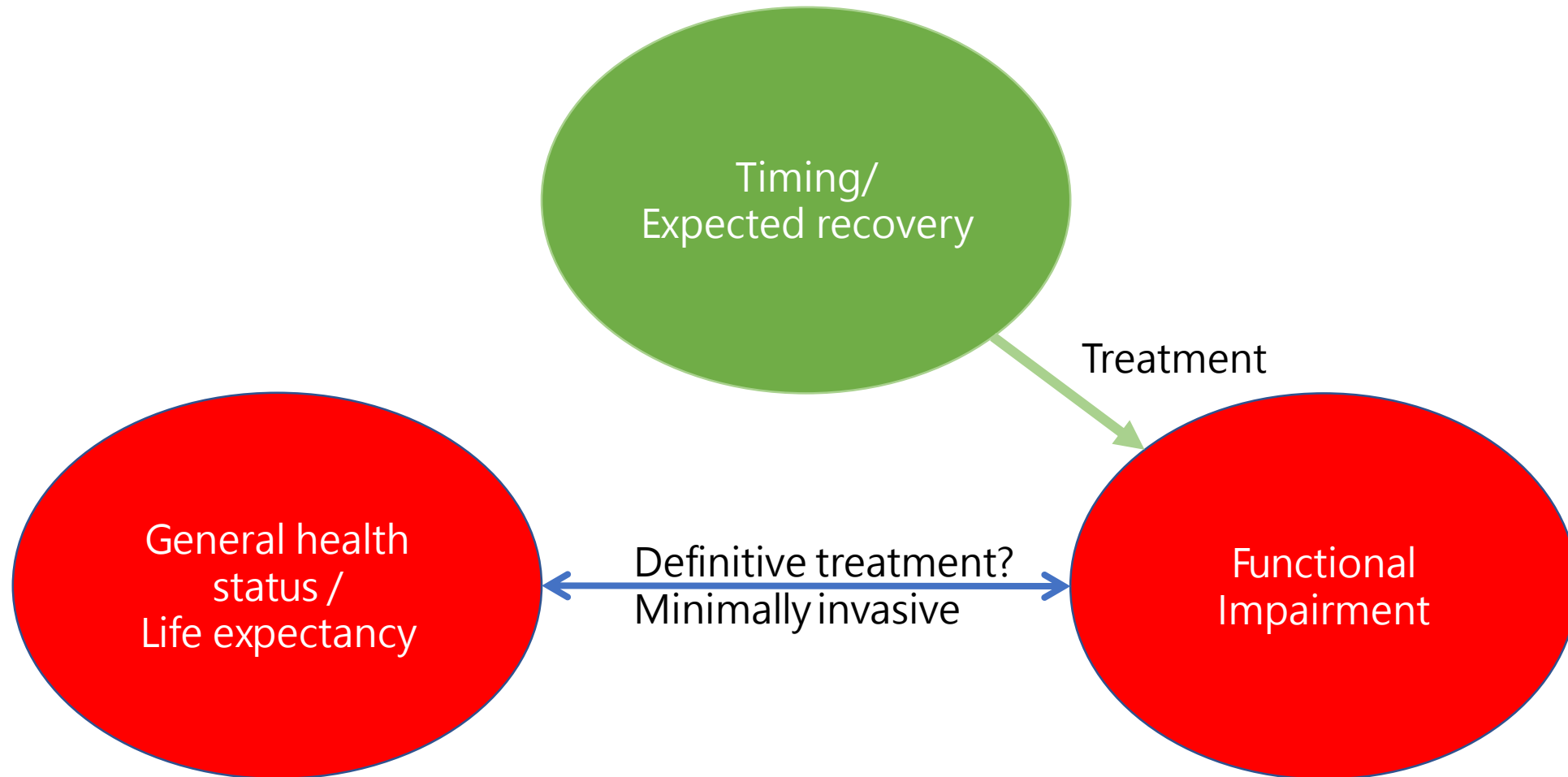
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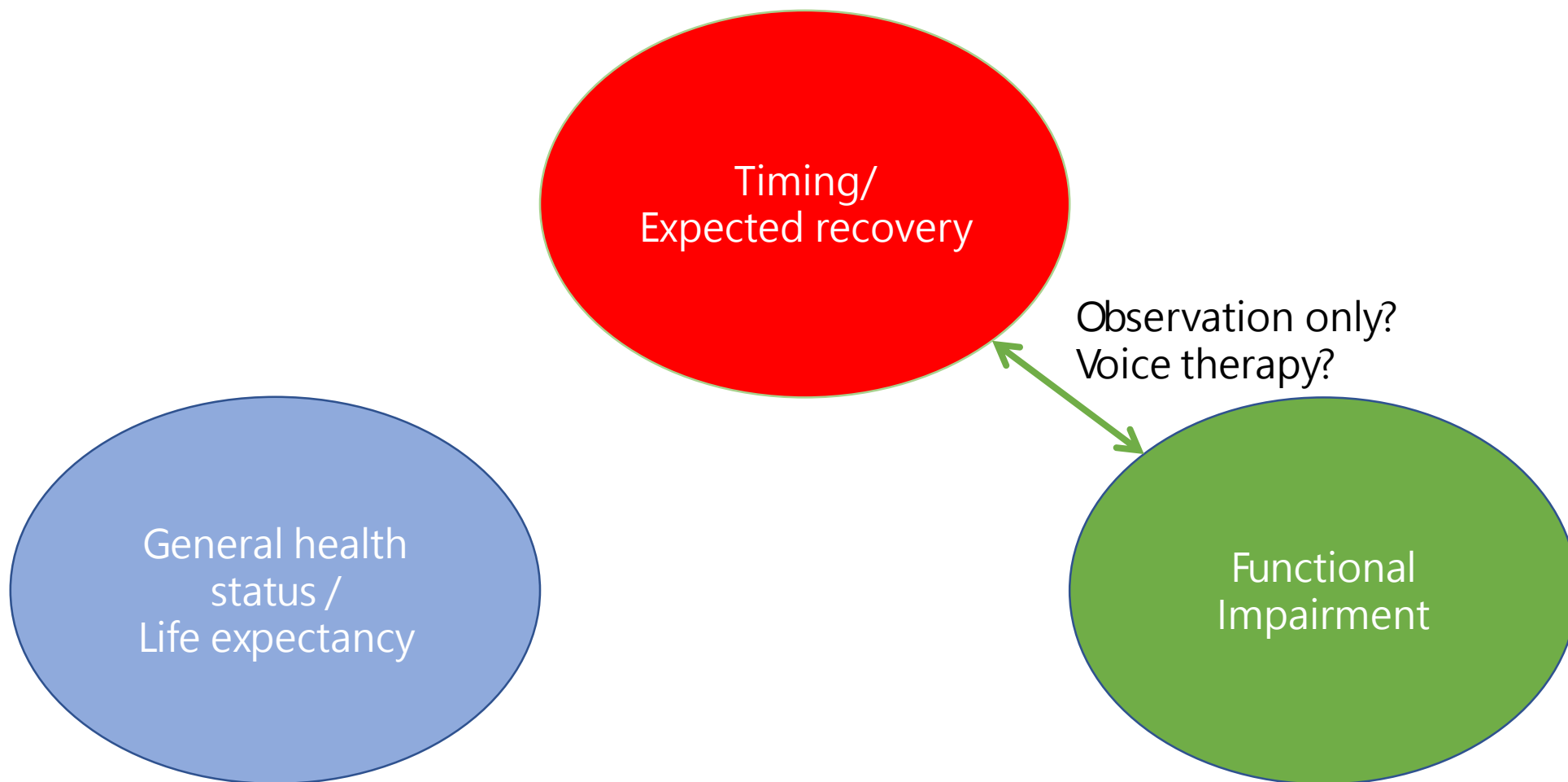
Impact on decision-making



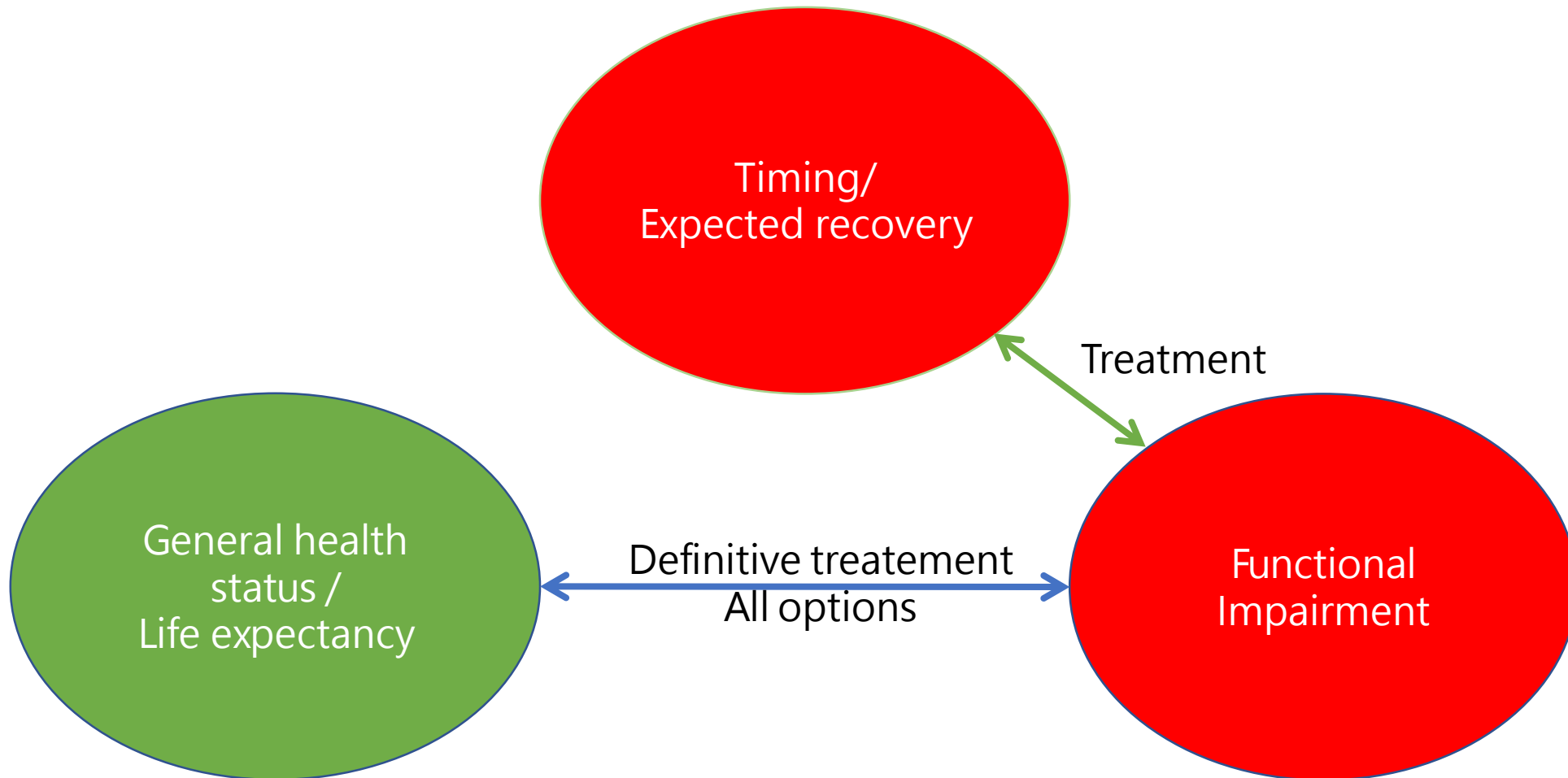
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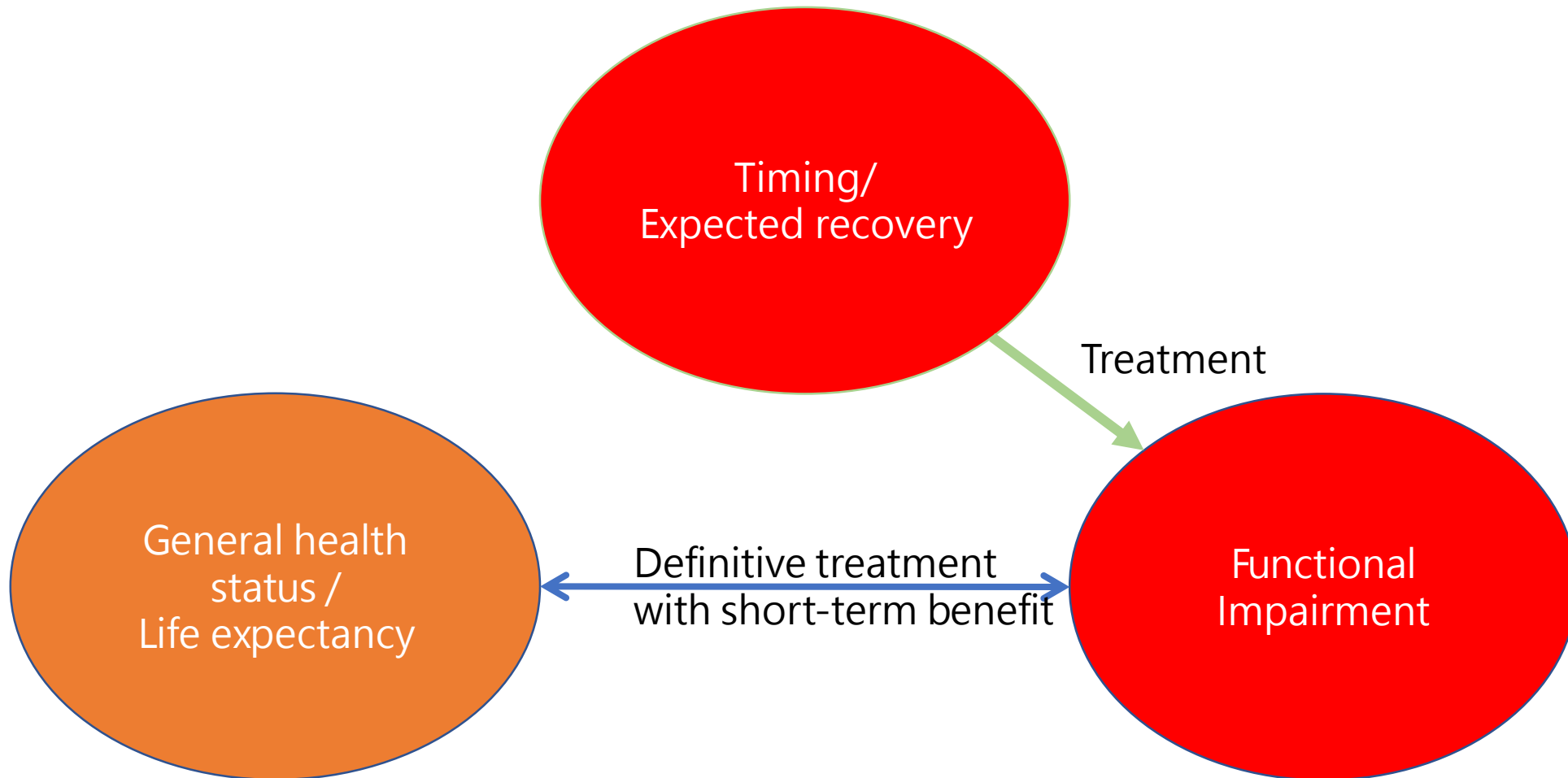
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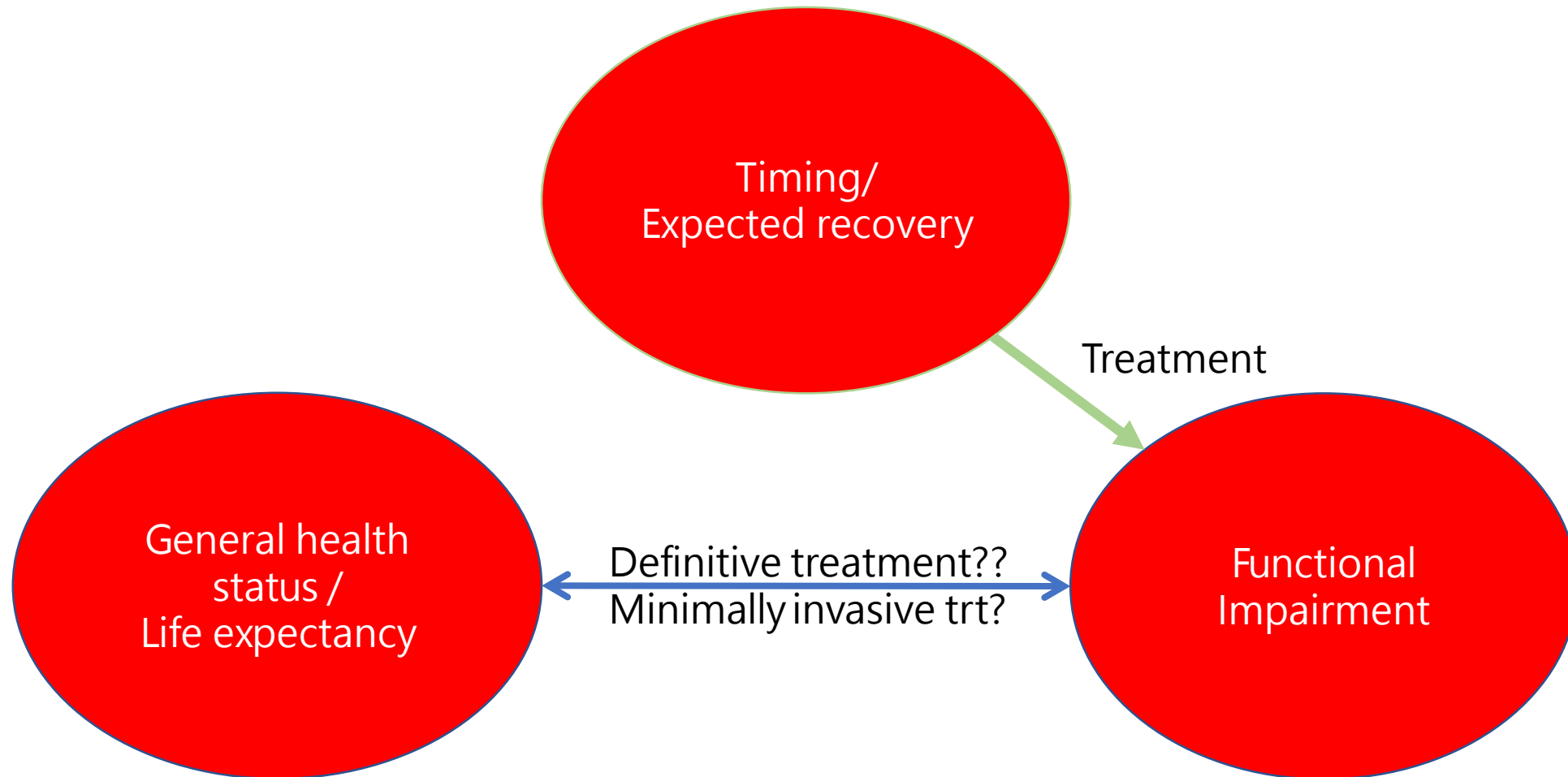
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Take-home messages

1

UVFP is dynamic

The vocal fold is immobile today, but the clinical trajectory is still evolving.

2

Recovery has several meanings

Nerve recovery, motion recovery and voice recovery are not equivalent.

3

Treatment follows prognosis and context

Expected recovery, functional impairment and general health status guide timing and invasiveness.

Thank you!

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JUNE 10—12
2027

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