

Effective health communication - the challenge of multimorbidity

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Multimorbidity and communication

Multimorbidity:

- Any co-existing disease - acute and/or chronic combinations

Communication and participation:

Broadly defined – all aspects of consumers who are informed and active:

- More knowledgeable and competent;
- Able to express their views and beliefs;
- Making choices alone or with health professionals;
- Supported or supportive;
- Minimising risks and harms;
- Accessing high quality information and quality health services; and
- Participating in planning, service improvement and research.

Multimorbidity is an issue for communication

Multimorbidity leads to:

- Poorer health, psychological and psychosocial outcomes, lower physical function
 - More polypharmacy, adverse events and hospitalisations
 - Premature death.
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- A large proportion of people with a chronic disease have more than one condition – and rates are rising

Multimorbidity is an issue for communication

- For people with a chronic condition, communication is key
- Good communication improves health outcomes
- Communication involves many aspects:
 - Treatment priorities and conflicts
 - Self management
 - Information and education
- Communication needs to look at both the consumer and health professional perspectives

Multimorbidity is an issue for communication

- Communication where multimorbidity exists needs to account for more complexity – due to
 - Accumulating number and types of diseases
 - Interactions between diseases
- This complexity has implications both for clinical care and for the experience and management of health

Connecting social and clinical domains

	SOCIAL DOMAIN	CLINICAL DOMAIN
Prioritisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whose priorities?• How, and with whom, to discuss incompatible or conflicting treatment recommendations?• How do goals change over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does management of one condition need to be prioritised above the other for a clinical reason?• Who is the umpire?

Connecting social and clinical domains

	SOCIAL DOMAIN	CLINICAL DOMAIN
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the skills needed to manage arthritis plus additional problems?• What is the range of supports?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How might accumulating conditions and treatments affect patient adherence to treatments and health maintenance actions?

Connecting social and clinical domains

Other aspects of communication and multimorbidity:

- Decision making
- Coordination of care and treatment
- The impact of multimorbidity
- Accumulating diagnoses
- Information sources

Communication and multimorbidity – next steps

- We need to know what issues exist - from a range of perspectives - and their impacts
 - People's experiences – balancing demand, adverse events, barriers to self-management or health promotion
 - Disadvantaged groups – barriers to participation and self-management where multimorbidity exists
- We need to identify ways to target or improve these problems
 - Involve consumers in identifying gaps, priorities and preferred strategies
 - Create a research awareness of multimorbidity – eg Cochrane SRs
 - Collaborations between researchers and groups such as Arthritis Victoria to address the social and clinical intersections of care