

Comorbidity

Prof. Dr. Pëllumb PIPERO

Comorbidities are concomitant diseases and may include physical or mental health and may refer to the coexistence of two or more pathologies, which appeared at the same time, or at different times, affecting a system or different systems. Comorbidities have a great effect on the life of patients because the presence of a social disease can lead to an increase in the inability to work, reducing the cost of living, the management of the disease becomes more complex and significantly reduces the productivity of a society.

Within the last decade, the group of co-morbidities has become a growing health problem, as well as the leading causes of death on a global level and will continue to challenge health care professionals in the upcoming years. While previously individuals had a known chronic pathology, currently people live with more than one chronic pathology, known as comorbidity or multimorbidity. The terms comorbidity and multimorbidity are often used interchangeably to refer to co-occurring conditions, however they have an important distinction¹. While both terms state the occurrence of multiple conditions within the same individual, comorbidity refers to one or more additional conditions in reference to an index condition such as comorbidity in diabetes mellitus. In comparison, multimorbidity describes that no one condition is holding priority over any of the co-occurring conditions². Therefore, the complexity of comorbidity and multimorbidity has brought great challenges to the health care system, health care professionals and the person living with them.

¹ Yogini V Chudasama, Kamlesh Khunti and Melanie J Davies (2021). Clustering of comorbidities. *Future Healthcare Journal* Vol 8, No 2: e224–229. DOI: 10.7861/fhj.2021-0085

² Tugwell Peter, Knottnerus Peter (2019). Multimorbidity and Comorbidity are now separate MESH headings. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, Vol 105, 6-8. Elsevier.

Clinical studies show that comorbidity is a common phenomenon, the rule rather than the exception in several medical disciplines, and particularly in the elderly. Comorbidity is associated with poorer health outcomes, more complex clinical management, and increased health care costs. Understanding independent risk factors and/or causality, determining underlying mechanisms and clinical implications is challenging, as it is due to multiple factors and patient specifics.

Some of the clinical case studies presented in this issue of Medicus Journal will contribute to better understanding of comorbidity through the approaches selected by medical doctors in their clinical practice, the impact of specific comorbidities and the management of patients' outcome.

