

Chronic respiratory disease and multimorbidity: prevalence and impact in a general practice setting.

Dr Siobhan O’Kelly

ABSTRACT

Background: Multimorbidity is defined as two or more co-existing chronic conditions in an individual and is common in general practice. It is associated with poorer outcomes for patients. This study aimed to establish the prevalence of multimorbidity in patients with chronic respiratory disease in general practice and to describe its impact on healthservice use.

Methods: Cross sectional study based in three general practices in Dublin. Drug and disease code searches were performed to identify adult patients with a diagnosis of chronic respiratory disease. Medical records were reviewed for chronic respiratory diagnosis, other chronic conditions, demographic characteristics, GP and practice nurse utilisation rates, and numbers of medications. Data was collected between October and April 2008, anonymised and entered into the statistical package Stata (version 9) for analysis.

Results: Sixty per cent of adults with a chronic respiratory condition had one or more co-existing chronic condition(s). GP and practice nurse utilisation rates, and number of medications were significantly higher among those with multimorbidity compared with those with respiratory disease alone. Multivariate analysis showed that increasing age and low socio-economic status were significantly associated with multimorbidity.

Conclusion: Sixty percent of adult patients with chronic respiratory disease in this study had multimorbidity. Clinical guidelines based on single disease entities and outcomes are not as easy to implement and may not be as effective in this group.