

Chronic conditions rise in older people

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The number of older people in England living with more than one chronic condition could have risen by ten per cent in the last decade putting increasing pressure on the NHS, new research has suggested.

NIHR-funded researchers have found more older people now have at least one chronic disease, adding further strain on health budgets amid a rise in long-term conditions and people living longer.

A study, which examined more than 15,000 people in England over ten years, showed there was an increasing trend in people aged over 50 developing a second or third disease. It also found that people who were physically active were healthier.

The percentage of older people with multiple conditions, including Type 2 diabetes, [high blood pressure](#) and arthritis, steadily increased from 31.7 per cent in 2002/03 to 43.1 per cent in 2012/13, according to the article published in the online journal the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*.

The proportion of [older people](#) without a [chronic condition](#) decreased over the same period from 33.9 per cent to 26.8 per cent, researchers also found.

Professor Kamlesh Khunti, Professor of Primary Care Diabetes & Vascular Medicine at the University of Leicester based at the Leicester Diabetes Centre, said: "The prevalence of multimorbidity, where people have more than one chronic condition, in older adults is steadily

increasing over time.

"The current models of care globally are based on the management of individual chronic conditions. However, given the increase in multimorbidity over the past 10 years and the complex needs of these patients, clinical guidelines need to address the challenges in management of multimorbidity and formulate best practices to guide clinical decision making for these patients."

Fellow researcher Dr Nafeesa Dhalwani, also from the University of Leicester based at the Leicester Diabetes Centre, added:

"Multimorbidity has become one of the main challenges in the recent years for patients, health care providers and the health care systems globally.

"Literature describing the burden of multimorbidity in the elderly population, especially trends over longer periods is very limited. Physical activity is recommended as one of the main lifestyle changes in the prevention and management of multiple [chronic diseases](#) worldwide, however, the evidence on its association with multimorbidity remains inconclusive. This was an observational study so it can tell us about the trends, but it cannot tell us about the causes of multimorbidity because other factors could be involved. We would need to run an experimental trial to see the causal effects of [physical activity](#)."

More information: Nafeesa N. Dhalwani et al. Long terms trends of multimorbidity and association with physical activity in older English population, *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* (2016). [DOI: 10.1186/s12966-016-0330-9](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-016-0330-9)

Provided by University of Leicester

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