

Study highlights need for better treatment of heart failure patients

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A new study by researchers from the Universities of Leicester and Keele, has highlighted the need for better treatment of heart disease patients suffering from additional chronic conditions.

Guidelines currently advise clinicians to focus on the patient's cardiovascular status, often ignoring their non-cardiovascular disorders

and symptoms, despite these often having a bigger burden on their quality of life.

Heart [failure](#) is a common chronic and progressive condition, where the heart muscle is unable to pump enough blood through the body to meet the body's needs. These patients often suffer with one or more additional chronic conditions, otherwise known as comorbidities.

Researchers at the University of Leicester and Keele University worked with Linköping University and the Australian Catholic University, to develop a new healthcare model which considers both the patient's cardiovascular and non-cardiovascular comorbidities, using data from 10,575 heart failure patients in the Swedish Heart Failure Register. The study findings were published today in *PLOS Medicine*.

The study showed that the most predominant symptoms associated with cardiovascular comorbidities were pain and anxiety, whereas shortness of breath, leg swelling, and fatigue were common symptoms associated with non-cardiovascular comorbidities.

These non-cardiovascular conditions were found to have a much higher burden on the patients' quality of life and more severe symptoms than the cardiovascular [conditions](#).

Dr Claire Lawson, a Wellcome-Trust Fellow and Lecturer at the University of Leicester, commented: "This study highlights the lack of understanding about the relationship among different comorbidities, and the quality of life for patients with [heart](#) failure. It demonstrates the importance to develop guidance for the use of an individualised treatment approach for these patients."

Keele University Senior Lecturer, Dr Ivonne Solis-Trapala, added: "Although these findings are limited because of the cross-sectional

nature of the study, they provide considerable evidence that targeting specific comorbidities and their associated symptoms could be an effective approach in treating [patients](#) with [heart failure](#)."

More information: *PLOS Medicine* (2018).
[journals.plos.org/plosmedicine ... journal.pmed.1002540](https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/.../journal.pmed.1002540)

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