

# Fifty percent of cardiovascular patients suffer from multiple diseases

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New research led by The University of Western Australia has revealed that one in two patients admitted to hospital with a cardiovascular disease is suffering from multiple chronic medical conditions which required complex treatment. The rate was significantly higher among Aboriginal people, affecting three in four patients.

The study, published today in *PLOS ONE*, was carried out by the UWA School of Population and Global Health and the Western Australian Centre for Rural Health and examined WA health data in patients aged between 25 and 59 years.

Cardiovascular diseases, including heart attack and stroke, are responsible for the majority of deaths and disability among Australians, second only to cancer. The [health care costs](#) associated with managing these conditions is substantial.

The data identified the presence of distinct patterns or combinations of commonly occurring long-term medical diseases in cardiovascular disease patients.

It revealed combinations of [mental health issues](#) including alcohol and drug abuse and respiratory conditions to be more prevalent in people under 40 years, while metabolic conditions like diabetes, hypertension and chronic kidney diseases were common in those over 40 years.

Lead researcher Dr. Mohammad Akhtar Hussain said although his team identified the disease combinations in hospitalised [cardiovascular disease](#) patients, they expected these patterns to be reflective of what was present in the community.

"A shift in thinking in how to provide high-quality, patient-centred, holistic care to patients with cardiovascular diseases and multiple health conditions is needed," Dr. Hussain said.

"This research can inform the types of services that need to be brought together within a one-stop shop in order to meet the needs of patients."

Co-author Professor Sandra Thompson from the Western Australian Centre for Rural Health said the research had implications for current

treatment guidelines where treatments assessed in drug trials generally focused on one specific condition.

"The clinical care of patients with [cardiovascular conditions](#) has become more complex," Professor Thompson said.

"Rather than providing care in a single disease paradigm, management of cardiovascular diseases needs to be delivered by multidisciplinary teams that focus on the whole patient and all of the relevant conditions they have."

**More information:** Mohammad Akhtar Hussain et al. Complexity in disease management: A linked data analysis of multimorbidity in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients hospitalised with atherothrombotic disease in Western Australia, *PLOS ONE* (2018). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0201496](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0201496)

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