

# Medications—As many as needed, as few as possible

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A third of all patients in general practice suffer from multiple diseases. These patients are usually treated by various medical specialists who often do not adequately coordinate their prescriptions. The mixture of pills may not only have serious side effects; it also strains and unsettles many patients. The appointment of Professor Marjan van den Akker as

new "Endowed Chair for Polypharmacy and Health Services Research" at Goethe University's Institute of General Practice should help to improve this situation.

Marjan van den Akker worked at the Maastricht University (Netherlands) and is an internationally recognised expert in the field of multimorbidity and polypharmacy. From 1st March, she will start projects to enhance [medication prescriptions](#) to patients with multimorbidity (co-occurring diseases) in cooperation with doctors, pharmacists, scientists and nurse practitioners. The chair has been endowed for a period of six years by INSIGHT Health, a company that specialises in the analysis of medical prescriptions.

"Older patients in particular, but younger patients as well, are affected by multimorbidity. They usually have a complex health situation that can be quite challenging for doctors," says Professor van den Akker. Her research focuses on frequent disease combinations and their medical treatment. She wants to improve the care for these patients by the further development and evaluation of interventions.

Previous studies have shown that for many patients with multimorbidity, overall prescriptions can be improved either by reducing medications, or sometimes by prescribing additional medication. "It's important to me to take the preferences and living circumstances of the [patients](#) into account. The benefits and risks of medication need to be discussed with their doctor, and a decision then reached together."

In view of the frequency and complexity of polypharmacy, Professor van den Akker desires to educate both medical and pharmaceutical students in caring for this patient group. She plans to set up an interdisciplinary teaching programme offering joint classes for future doctors and future pharmacists.

Prof. Ferdinand Gerlach, Director of the Institute of General Practice, is happy with the new chair. "The new endowed chair is a perfect fit for our research profile in Frankfurt. With Professor van Akker, we can develop new paths for improving health care for the chronically ill and support general practitioners in their important work even better."

Professor Pfeilschifter, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, adds: "Medication research and [medication](#) therapy are a focal point of the Faculty of Medicine and of Goethe University overall. As such Professor van den Akker is an excellent choice and she complements the dynamic field of Medicine at Goethe University."

Provided by Goethe University Frankfurt am Main

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