

# Addressing the prevalence of multimorbidity among aging adults

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The United Nations Population Division estimates the number of people

aged 65 and older will double over the next three decades, reaching 1.6 billion by 2050. As more people are living longer, they are more likely to have two or more persistent chronic conditions, also known as multimorbidity. This makes it difficult for patients to manage their health and can strain health system resources.

A recent study led by Preeti Zanwar, Ph.D., MPH, MS, an adjunct research and teaching faculty and aging and health disparities researcher at Jefferson, sheds light on the prevalence of multimorbidity among aging adults in India and recommends how public health officials can prevent adverse effects.

The findings are [published](#) in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Dr. Zanwar reviewed data from the Longitudinal Aging Study of India, the largest nationally representative longitudinal survey study of adults in India, and found that multimorbidity is prevalent across various sub-populations in India, including [older adults](#), women, those within groups of lower socioeconomic status and Muslims. The study found that these populations had a higher burden of chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, stroke and cancer.

Dr. Zanwar says the results must be taken with caution, given that multimorbidity prevalence in this study is self-reported and only captured among those who had access to a health care professional. Nevertheless, these findings emphasize the urgent need for public health interventions to prevent, manage and control multimorbidity among older adults in India and other countries.

"It is a global issue," Dr. Zanwar says. "This is an important time for researchers to do cross-country comparisons on multimorbidity and the policies that can help address this issue."

To Dr. Zanwar's surprise, the study found that multimorbidity rates were higher than expected among individuals with higher levels of education. Future research could investigate the role of education as a risk or protective factor for multimorbidity.

The study suggests greater access to [health care](#), care coordination among providers and culturally tailored interventions as essential strategies to address the growing multimorbidity prevalence in India and reach those who may not have access to care.

**More information:** Preeti Pushpalata Zanwar et al, Characterizing Multimorbidity Prevalence and Adverse Outcomes in Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Sub-Populations in India: Gaps, Opportunities, and Future Directions, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2024). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph21030327](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21030327)

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