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Study finds increased chronic disease complexity among Ontario patients over 10 years

A new analysis of diagnostic data in Ontario found increases in patient complexity and chronic disease. It is published in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*

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Using the Canadian Institute for Health Information's (CIHI) Population Grouping Methodology, the researchers estimated patient complexity by looking at diagnostic codes from all available health care settings from 2008/09 to 2017/18, which allowed for a detailed understanding of chronic illness in Ontario.

"The resources required to treat Ontario's patients have increased over the 10-year period beyond what could be expected from population aging," says Dr. Sharada Weir, Healthcare Evaluative Research Director with the Economics, Policy & Research Department, Ontario Medical Association, Toronto, Ontario.

The authors took advantage of the rich clinical information provided by the CIHI diagnostic grouping tool to estimate the prevalence of 85 chronic diseases and the co-occurrence of two or more diseases (multimorbidity).

"While the overall increase in the number of patients with chronic disease is largely because of an ageing population, the increase in chronic disease prevalence for adolescents and young adults may signal future health risks for this cohort," says lead author Mitch Steffler, Data Scientist with the Economics, Policy & Research Department, Ontario Medical Association, Toronto, Ontario. "These trends in chronic

illness and patient complexity have implications for health system planning. It is important to ensure that health system resources can meet the needs of an increasingly complex patient population.”

“*Trends in prevalence of chronic disease and multimorbidity in Ontario, Canada*” is published February 22, 2021.

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