

Polypharmacy from a clinical perspective

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Webinar for C3-Cloud, August 28, 2020*



No conflicts of interest to declare

OVERVIEW

The problem of polypharmacy in older adults

How to assess (potentially) inappropriate medications (PIMs) ?

Focus on the aspects covered by PIMs lists

Evidence of the impact of interventions using PIM-lists

Take home messages

The problem of Polypharmacy in Older Adults

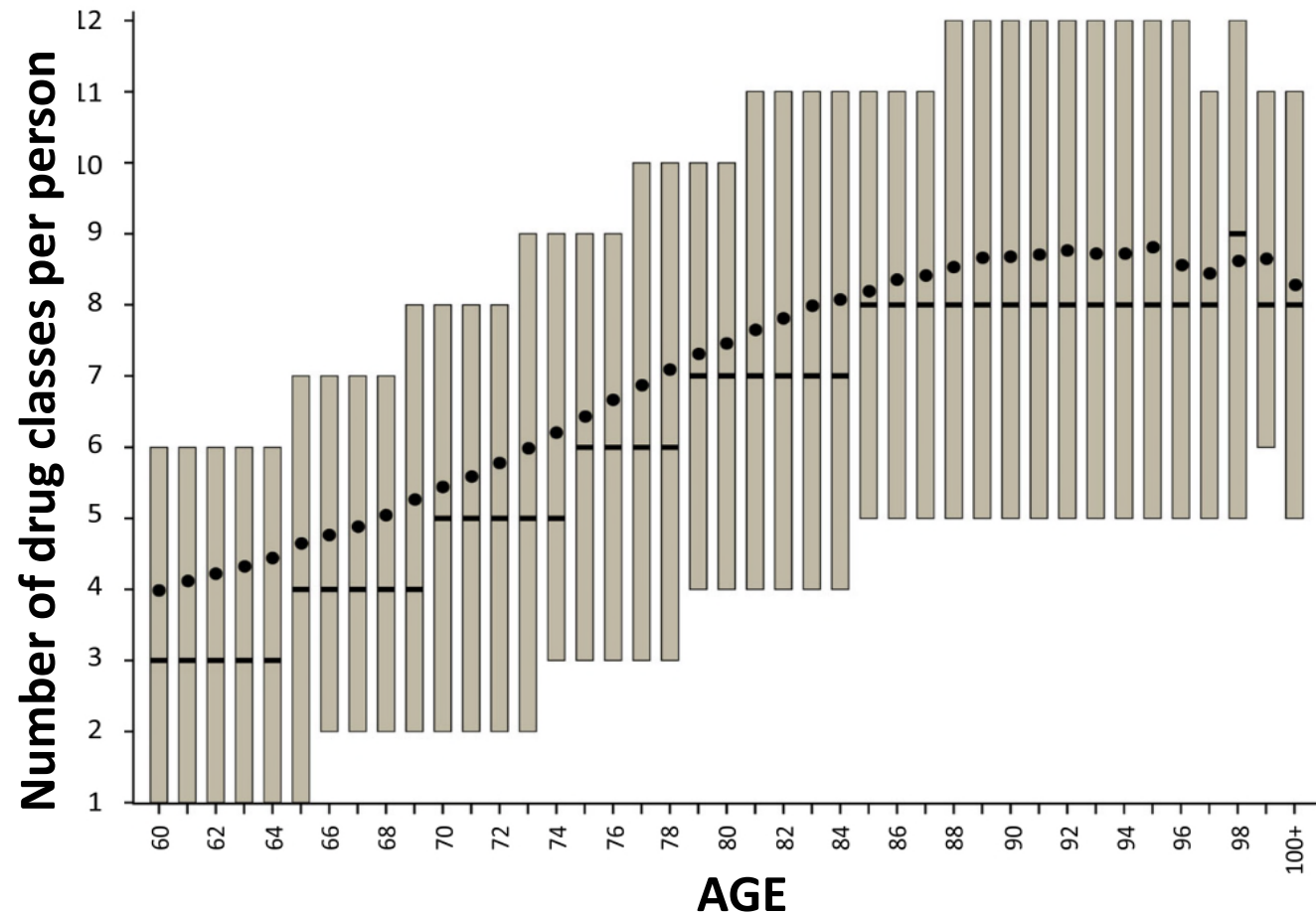
THE OLDER ADULTS (ELDERLY) AND MEDICATION

- In the developed world, 15 to 20% of the population is 65+ (and this percentage is growing).
- Among the population of 65+
 - Many of the healthy aging older adults take one or more chronic medication
 - Of the community-dwelling very old (80+) also more than half present polymorbidity and polypharmacy
 - 5 to 8% (of the 65+) reside in Nursing Homes (long-time care facilities LTCF)
 - Most of them have polypharmacy (a median of 8 or more chronic medications with systemic action)
 - For 1 in 2 citizens, the end-of-life trajectory is going to a nursing home and die there,

A nation-wide appraisal of polypharmacy in Denmark

Fig. 1 Mean, median and IQR of the number of unique drug classes per older adult as a function of age. Boxes represent the interquartile range with the median score shown as a horizontal line and the means represented as circles

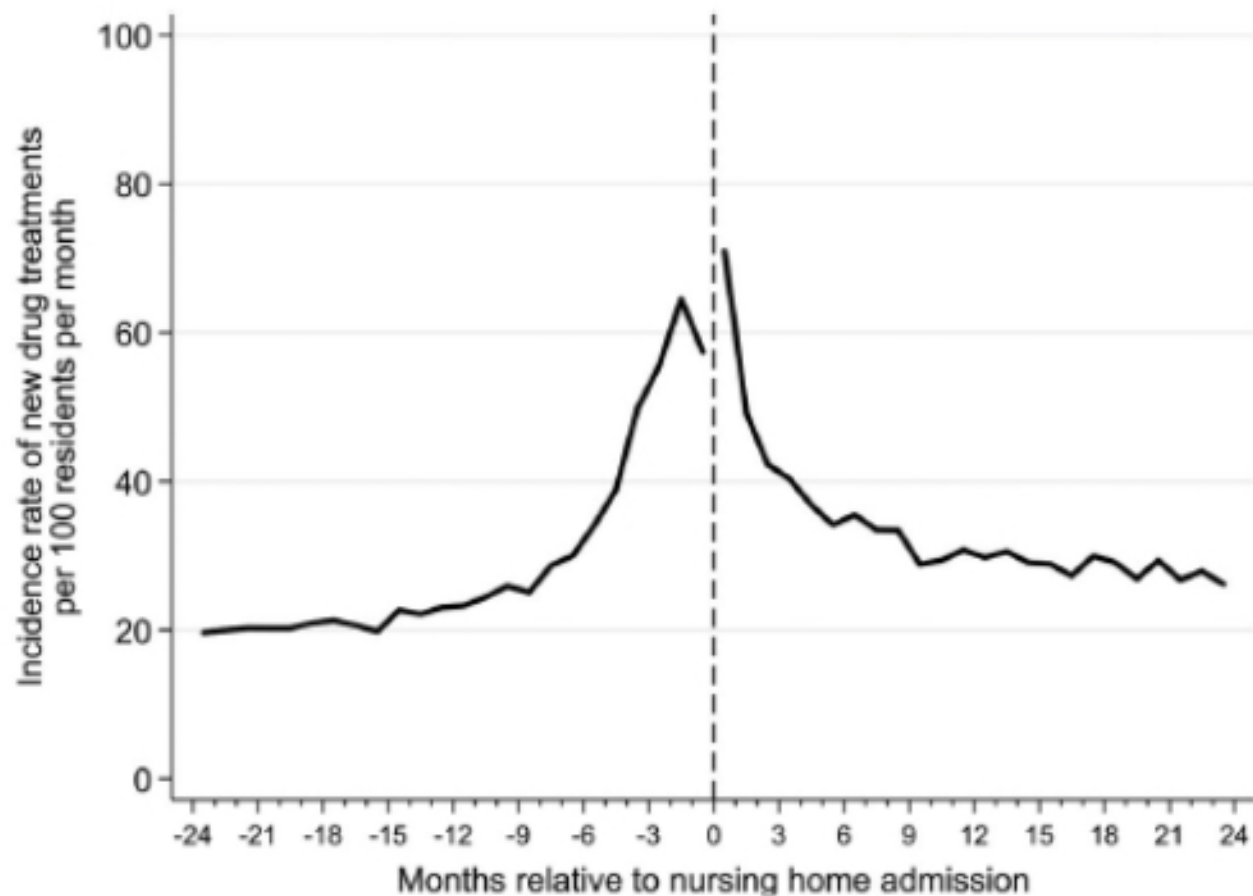
1,4 million
Danish residents 60+
(mean 70Y,
53% women)



(Christensen et al., 2019, Eur J Clin Pharmacol)

Incidence of new drug treatments rate during transition from community-dwelling to nursing home

Use of medication among nursing home residents: a Danish drug utilisation study



A cohort of 5,179 individuals (63% women; median age of 84y) admitted into 94 nursing homes across Denmark during 2015–2017.

Polypharmacy is just a number

What is the number ?

the number of chronic medications (with systemic action)
taken by one patient at a given moment in time

What is polypharmacy ?

5 or more chronic medications (with systemic action)
taken by one patient at a given moment in time

What is excessive polypharmacy ?

10 or more chronic medication (with systemic action)
taken by one patient at a given moment in time

Some statements to consider

Not all polypharmacy is bad

It might be perfectly appropriate for a patient with 4 chronic conditions to take 5 different medications

Not every patient with less than 5 medications is well treated

It might be that a patient on 4 appropriate medications for 3 chronic conditions might have two more chronic conditions which are not treated as they should be

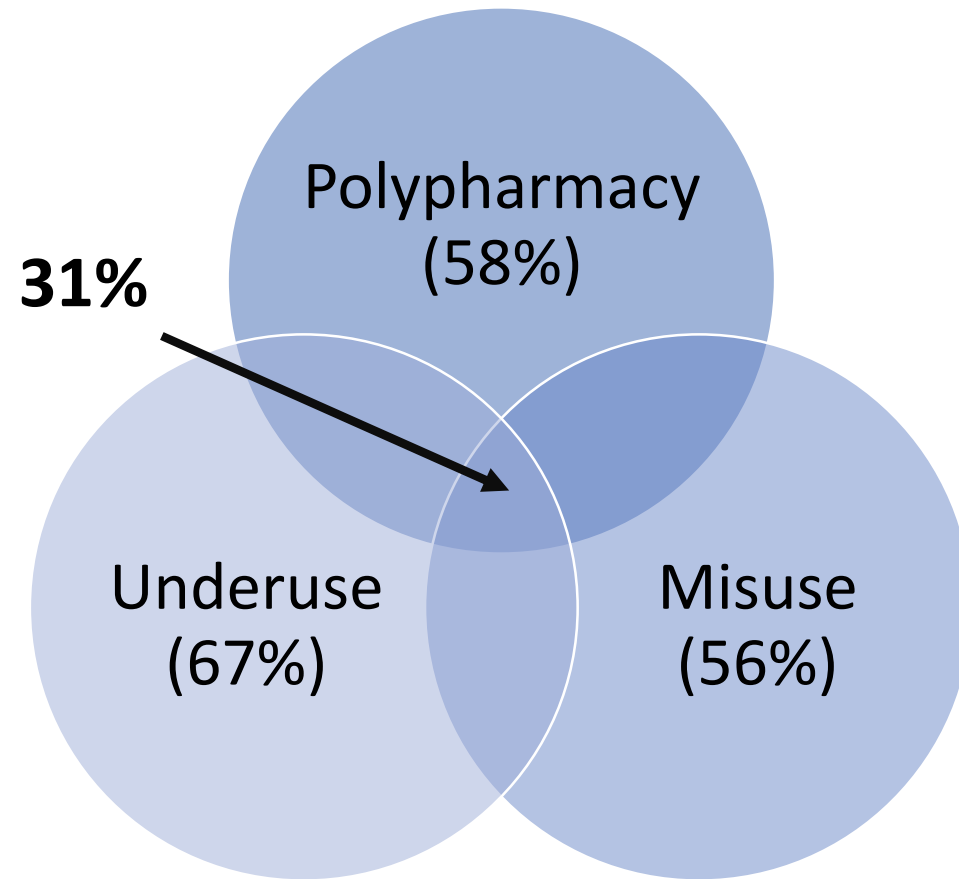
What counts is whether each chronic condition of the patient

- is not left untreated (underuse)
- and treated with appropriate medication (proper use) and not with inappropriate medication (misuse)

Most guidelines are directed to one clinical condition.

If a patient with multimorbidity is treated by the book, the number of medications may be high and become a problem in itself.

Prevalence of Potentially inappropriate medication in community-dwelling older adults (80+)



503 Belgian community dwelling 80+
(mean 84,4Y, 61,2% women)



How to assess
(potentially) inappropriate prescribing ?

Two different approaches

1. By having clinical experts assessing the medical records and medication lists

Medication Appropriateness Index

(ten questions for each medication line)

Using validated lists of explicit criteria :

Beers' list (US) ; STOPP-START list (EU)

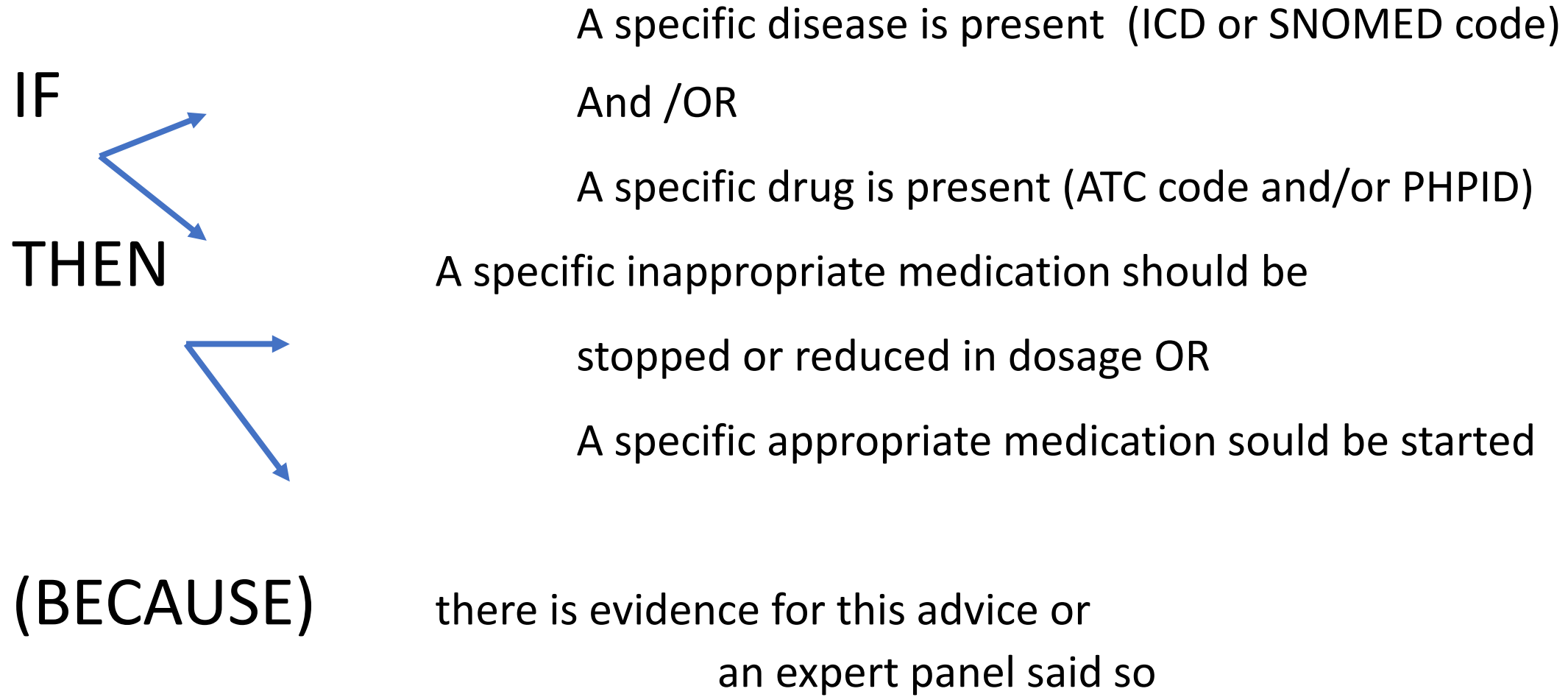
Note: This approach is time consuming, and expert resources might simply not be available

2. By combining multidisciplinary Medication Review

with ICT assesement of (potentially) inappropriate medication (PIMs),
assessed by explicit criteria

Prima-EDS / OptiMeds /

Explicit criterion of (in)appropriate prescribing : a decision rule



Validation of explicit criteria of Potentially (in)appropriate medication (PIM)

Mostly originated from expert panels using Delphi Methodology

Validated as lists of PIMs (not by individual PIM)

- In cross-sectional observational studies
- In longitudinal observational studies
- In randomised clinical trials

Validity to assess the quality of pharmacotherapy of an individual patient remains

Selection of 650 explicit criteria from the 3 most important, validated, and current lists

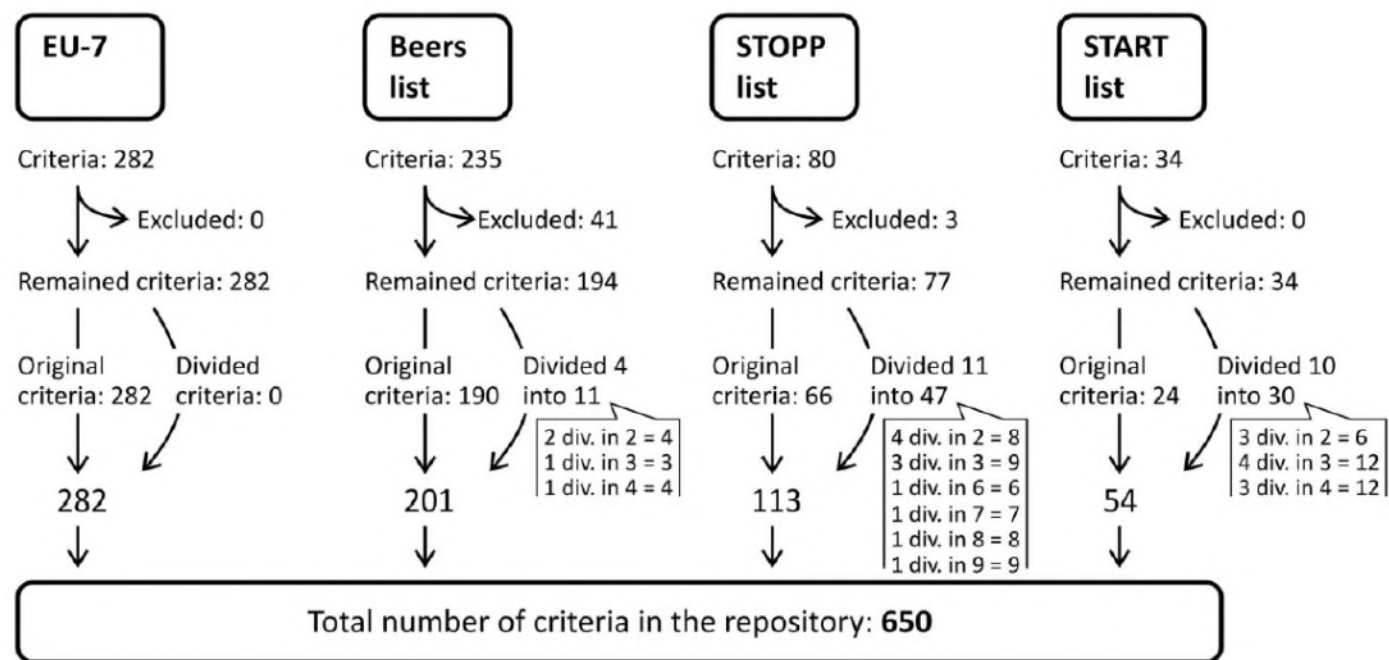


Figure 2 Flow chart of the selection of the criteria. All explicit criteria from the three included lists were considered for inclusion. We excluded explicit criteria focused on drug–drug interactions, as well as too general explicit criteria (not referring to a specific medication or definable drug group). Some of the criteria were divided for more operable use. From the original number of 641 criteria in the three lists, 44 criteria were excluded, and 25 criteria were divided for more operable use into 88 criteria. This resulted in a total number of 650 potentially inappropriate medications criteria included in the repository.

Prerequisites for wide spread use of PIMs-lists

- **Availability of data** (reliable medication and clinical data)
 - Access to the eMAR data (the nurse administration data)
 - Access to Current Patient Summaries
- **Computerization** of PIMs
- **Interpretation in clinical context** of PIMs
- **Multidisciplinarity** (General Practitioner, community pharmacist, attending nurse)
- **Adequate ICT support** for communication of results between the multidisciplinary actors
- **Global identification of medicinal products** (UNICOM)
 - Better application of decision rules, internationalization of CDS systems -

Focus on the aspects covered by
Potentially inappropriate medication lists

Focus on the aspects covered by Potentially Inappropriate medication Lists

- Underuse
- Obsolete drugs
- Dangerous drugs in the elderly
- Interactions (pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic)
(two drugs fighting or reinforcing each others action or side-effect)
- Discontinuation and/or deprescribing
 - Benzo's, Antipsychotics, PPIs
 - Statins, Calcium
- Compliance to complex guidelines in specific clinical conditions

Evidence of the impact of remedial actions
Using PIM-lists

Which clinical outcomes ?

- Mortality
- (Drug-related) unplanned hospitalisations
- Reduction of Quality of life
- Cognitive impairment
- Lack of alertness
- Falls
- Cost of health care
- ...

Methods of measuring impact

- With experts in research setting
 - using clinical insight and implicit criteria
 - using explicit criteria
- With computer generated PIMs evaluation in research setting
 - Based on medication data only (scratch the surface)
 - Based on medication data and on (reliable) clinical data
- With computer generated PIMs evaluation on Real World Data

Differences in method have an Impact on :

- estimates of prevalence of the problem
- estimates of effect size
- cost of the evaluation and cost benefit of the interventions

Results of observational and RCT outcome studies

Many studies showing impact on process indicators

Reduction of the mean number of PIMs per patient

Some studies show association with
mortality and hospitalisation

Most studies show no association with falls (multicausality)

Most studies fail to show association with quality of life

NOTE : Multidisciplinary cooperation supported by ICT is important
(General Practitioner, pharmacist, nurse, geriatrician)
Change in organisational culture in health care services take time
Sufficient time frame is needed to evaluate outcome

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- These are vulnerable patients, often with insufficient clinical documentation
- A current Patient Summary with a reliable medication list is enough to unleash the power of ICT supported medication review.
- Good clinical data and ICT-Support will increase the efficiency of medication review, prevent alert fatigue, and facilitate interprofessional cooperation.

Take home messages

- Complex morbidity patterns and polypharmacy are the fate of many older adults, whether residing in nursing homes or community-dwelling.
- These are vulnerable patients, often with insufficient clinical documentation
- A current Patient Summary with a reliable medication list is enough to unleash the power of ICT supported medication review.
- Good clinical data and ICT-Support will increase the efficiency of medication review, prevent alert fatigue, and facilitate interprofessional cooperation.
- Better quality of prescribing could make this vulnerable population more resilient to pandemics and may reduce pharmacodynamic interactions with impact on Quality of Life. The latter statement needs more evidence.

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