

NAPCRG 52nd Annual Meeting — Abstracts of Completed Research 2024.

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Title

COVID-19: The Untold Story - A Qualitative Exploration of the Impacts of the Pandemic on Older Adults with Multimorbidity

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Social determinants and vulnerable populations

Presenters

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Abstract

There are direct impacts of having COVID-19 infection as well as wide reaching indirect impacts for the general population who experienced the pandemic, such as social isolation. Older adults and those with multimorbidity were among the population most impacted. Thus this research explored the direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on older adults with multimorbidity. Objective: To gain an in-depth understanding of the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic on older adults with multimorbidity by exploring their lived experiences. Study Design and Analysis: A phenomenological approach was utilized. Seventeen in-depth interviews were conducted with older adults who had multimorbidity. Team members included researchers and a patient partner. Thematic analysis was conducted. Setting: Province of Ontario, Canada. Population studied: Adults 50+ years of age who had two or more chronic conditions. Results: Overall, participants described varied impacts and experiences that were linked with their own contexts and unique situations. Four main themes emerged from the data analysis. Experiences Are Individual: Participants had different overall experiences of living through the pandemic – ranging from “not so bad” to “truly awful”, some having contracted COVID-19. Social Isolation: Social isolation was a profound and defining pandemic experience for many participants. For others, it was not as great a challenge. Lives Disrupted: Disruptions occurred in participants’ lives; the degree of disruption ranged from inconvenient (difficulty getting groceries) to the dire (unable to be with family member at death). How to Cope: While some participants coped with the pandemic by taking it day by day, most described specific activities they used to cope including activities that were solitary (e.g., yoga, reading) and those that were interactive or social (e.g., virtual connections with family, friends, groups). Conclusion: This study revealed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were highly variable depending on participants’ personal situations, with main impacts reported being social isolation and disruption in their lives. Many used coping strategies and, as with impacts, the nature,

extent and usefulness of these strategies varied among participants. Our findings highlight the importance of understanding patients' context when working with them to address on-going impacts such as social isolation and loneliness.

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