

Supplemental Material to:

Bayliss EA, Bonds DE, Boyd CM, et al. Understanding the context of health for persons with multiple chronic conditions: moving from what is the matter to what matters. *Ann Fam Med*. 2014;12:260-269.

Appendix: Patient Handout

Multiple Chronic Conditions Means Living with Two or More Ongoing Health Problems

The Concern

A person with high blood pressure and diabetes or arthritis and depression is living with multiple chronic conditions (MCC). More than 1 in 4 Americans has more than one ongoing health condition and for older adults nearly 3 in 4 live with multiple health problems.



Mrs. J is a perfect example. Every day she takes 11 pills ordered by different doctors for her high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, and occasional gout. Mrs. J had a stroke few years ago so she needs help caring for herself and rides to her many appointments. Her family tries to piece it together but find they can't do it all – her daughter says, “Sometimes important things just fall through the cracks.”

Like so many Americans, Mrs. J and her family wonder why it is so hard for the doctors, nurses and community workers to understand what is important to them and what will help them make the best choices given their situation.

The Challenge

The knowledge about how best to manage and treat MCC is limited because health care research tends to look at one condition at a time under very controlled situations. But as Mrs. J and her family know living with MCCs is complicated and personal situations can change.

The questions, needs and choices people with MCCs make may differ depending on the context of the situation. Health care research should consider this context to understand what it takes to manage MCCs every day in the places where people live, work and spend their time.

Context includes the characteristics, situations or circumstances that are present in a person's life that play a role in their health, such as their culture, values and goals, finances, housing or family support.

The Opportunity:

Today, more than ever, the nation is talking about health care.

- Many Americans recognize that the “usual” way of providing health care is not working for them. This is prompting increased engagement and advocacy by people seeking change.
- Doctors and nurses recognize that people with MCCs need better coordination and transitions of care including self-care and care provided by family and other caregivers.
- Researchers recognize that in order to answer the questions that matter most they must include patients and those close to them in the research process from start to finish, sharing study results with those who participate.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is a chronic condition?

A chronic condition is a physical or mental health condition that lasts a year or more and requires regular medical attention and/or limits a person from doing their usual daily activities.

What are examples of physical or mental health chronic conditions?

Physical chronic conditions include conditions such as osteoarthritis, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Chronic mental health conditions include depression, substance abuse, anxiety and dementia.

What does it mean to have multiple chronic conditions?

Multiple Chronic Conditions or MCC for short is a term used when someone has two or more chronic conditions at the same time. For example, both of these people have MCC:

- A person with arthritis and high blood pressure
- A person with a heart condition and depression

What does it mean to put research into context?

For People with Multiple Health Problems:

Doctors and researchers need you to help them think about the many characteristics, situations or circumstances that are a part of your life, your community, your health care services and the health policies that affect you.

For Health Care Providers and Researchers:

Context can often explain or give meaning to information shared by people with MCC during care and collected in health research. Contextual factors can help make sure that information is relevant that information is relevant to real situations.

For All of Us

Remember Mrs. J. who needs a ride to her appointments.

- Maybe she doesn't have a car or maybe she isn't well enough to drive.
- If family were not available how would Mrs. J manage?
- How would that impact her health or her ability to stay in her own home?
- What community services are available to fill the gaps?

The context of each of these situations is different. Without answers to these questions it would be difficult to help Mrs. J other people with MCC in different situations for which there might be different care and research related questions.

Everyone has contextual factors that influence their health whether they are a patient, caregivers or health professionals. We should work with researchers and the healthcare community to study these contextual factors that play a role in our health and explore how they make a difference.

This information is the work product of forty-five experts including people with MCC, family/friend caregivers, researchers, policymakers, and clinicians who came together on February 27-28, 2013 in Washington, DC. You can find more information about multiple chronic conditions at <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/initiatives/mcc/>