



Multimorbidity in People Aged 50 and Older – Temporal Trends and Regional Variation

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Abstract

Background

Due to demographic changes, the prevalence of chronic diseases and multimorbidity—the concurrent occurrence of multiple chronic conditions—is increasing in the German population. Understanding regional differences and temporal trends in multimorbidity is crucial for assessing current and future healthcare needs.

Methods

The study utilized nationwide pseudonymized outpatient claims data (§ 295 SGB V) spanning the years 2015 to 2024. The study population included all insured individuals aged 50 years and above who had at least one outpatient visit between 2015 and 2024. Based on a selection of 19 chronic diseases, prevalence of the concurrent occurrence of ≥ 2 , ≥ 3 , and ≥ 5 diseases was calculated according to age, sex, residential district, and the degree of regional socioeconomic deprivation of the district.

Results

In 2024, 45% of women and 43% of men aged 50–59 years had ≥ 2 chronic diseases. This proportion increased steadily with advancing age. Both women (+12%) and men (+14%) exhibited the strongest relative increases in multimorbidity prevalence for the category ≥ 5 diseases over the ten-year observation period. The prevalence of multimorbidity was higher in East compared to West Germany and was elevated in districts with high and very high socioeconomic deprivation compared to those with the lowest deprivation. However, there was also an East-West gradient within the deprivation categories.

Conclusion

The rising prevalence of multimorbidity underscores growing challenges for the German healthcare system, manifesting as increased complexity of care and anticipated rising costs. Elevated healthcare needs due to multimorbidity disproportionately affect individuals in socially disadvantaged regions, particularly in East German districts. Evidence on regional variations in multimorbidity can serve as a basis for resource allocation and for the planning of behavioral and structural preventive approaches to prevent chronic disease and multimorbidity.



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Keywords

Asthma, chronic diseases, comorbidity, COPD, depression, diabetes, hypertension, ischemic heart disease, lipometabolic disorder, multimorbidity, obesity, osteoporosis, outpatient care, prevalence, thyroid diseases

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