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Facing the challenge of multimorbidity: can family medicine create a conceptual model that is fit for purpose?

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Background: Increasing numbers of people are living with multimorbidity and yet the majority of care is focussed around single diseases. There is no clearly established model for clinicians to use, to help them address the complexities and challenges of multimorbidity integrating multiple single-disease based guidelines and managing polypharmacy, while also responding to patients own priorities. There is also little established evidence for interventions (Smith et al.,BMJ 2012), to guide practice or teaching.

The ability for us to coherently conceptualise multimorbidity is critical for family doctors to remain centre stage in today's multi-disciplinary multi-team systems.

Our aim is to gather expertise in order to develop a conceptual model for generalists to use in the clinical challenges of multimorbidity. We consider person centredness, co-ordinated care and shared decision making as givens and will not focus on them.

Method:

1. Brief Presentation:

We will consider potential strategies for clinical thinking about multi-morbidity:

1. A care plan model based on problems lists and interventions derived from these.
2. An individualised whole person model: moving from classification by diagnoses to causally linking the 'bio', the 'psycho' and the 'social'. An exemplar based on an intervention for offenders, (the Engager Project) will be used to demonstrate this.

We will move on to consider how decision making may need to change and some tools that may help this.

2. Group discussions: reflections on these strategies and other models brought by the participants

3. Concluding discussion to identify key themes in a model of multimorbidity.

Results and Conclusions: The participants will learn about and contribute to the creation of a conceptual model of clinical reasoning for multimorbidity which will be written up as a report. Establishing such a model will allow primary care to contribute better to the needs of this increasing population. It will inform education for current and trainee clinicians and support patients to self care.