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A visual approach to multimorbidity learning
Une approche visuelle de l'apprentissage de la multimorbidité

Filipe Prazeres

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Filipe Prazeres[1,2]

[1]USF Beira Ria, Gafanha da Nazaré, Portugal; [2]Faculdade de Ciências da Saúde, Universidade da Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal
Correspondence to: Filipe Prazeres, USF Beira Ria, 3830-596 Gafanha da Nazaré, Portugal; email: filipeprazeresmd@gmail.com

Brief commentary

Multimorbidity, the presence of 2+ chronic conditions in a person, is common,[1] yet medical students are ill-equipped to handle these cases.[2] This likely arises from medical education's focus on individual diseases, leaving students without a clear process for addressing complex patients during clinical apprenticeships.[2] Continuing to raise awareness on multimorbidity is important for better preparing future physicians to navigate the complexities of day-to-day patient care.

A picture is said to be worth a thousand words, but could it communicate the complexity of multimorbidity? I queried ChatGPT (October 1, 2024, version) to describe this teaching scenario. After, an illustration was created by the generative AI software Midjourney, and although still imperfect in some details, the feeling of being hit in the stomach is unavoidable when looking at this image, portraying not only the heavy burden of living with multimorbidity, but also showing the students' confused and worried looks. Two medical students stand around an older patient who looks unwell, his eyes staring distantly, as though detached from the realities of his medical care. The patient is seated next to a table, with medicine bottles and medical paraphernalia scattered around, symbolizing a disconcerting array of multiple health conditions and treatment options. The expressions on the students' faces transmit confusion, hesitation, and frustration. They are looking at their tablets, trying to piece together information about the patient's various conditions. Their postures show discomfort and unsettling uncertainty. A supervising doctor is watching the students, looking concerned but detached, reflecting the gap between education and real-world complexity. The lighting is bright but stark, almost sterile, reflecting the clinical environment while adding to the students' sense of unease. How do we as medical educators prepare our students for this reality?

Media

"A Visual Approach to Multimorbidity Learning" was created by the generative artificial intelligence software Midjourney. The subjects are fictional and do not depict real people.

References

1. Prazeres F, Santiago L. Prevalence of multimorbidity in the adult population attending primary care in Portugal: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open*. 2015;5:e009287 https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2015-009287
2. Penner K, Wicklum S, Johnston A, Kelly MA. Teaching multimorbidity to medical students. *Clin Teach*. 2024;e13794. https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.13794