

Patterns of multimorbidity in medical inpatients: a multinational retrospective cohort study

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46 **ABSTRACT**

47 **Background:** Multimorbidity is frequent and represents a significant burden for patients and healthcare
48 systems. However, there are limited data on the most common combinations of comorbidities in
49 multimorbid patients. We aimed to describe and quantify the most common combinations of comorbidities
50 in multimorbid medical inpatients.

51 **Methods:** Large retrospective cohort of adults discharged from the medical department of 11 hospitals
52 across three countries (USA, Switzerland, Israel) between 2010 and 2011. Diseases were classified into
53 acute versus chronic. Chronic diseases were grouped into clinically meaningful categories of comorbidities.
54 We identified the most prevalent combinations of comorbidities and compared the observed and expected
55 prevalence of the combinations. We assessed the distribution of acute and chronic diseases and the
56 median number of body systems in relationship to the total number of diseases.

57 **Results:** Eighty-six percent (n=126828/147806) of the patients were multimorbid (≥ 2 chronic diseases), with
58 a median of five chronic diseases; 13% of the patients had ≥ 10 chronic diseases. Among the most frequent
59 combinations of comorbidities, the most prevalent comorbidity was chronic heart disease. Other high-
60 prevalent comorbidities included mood disorders, arthropathy and arthritis, and esophageal disorders. The
61 ratio of chronic versus acute diseases was approximately 2:1.

62 **Conclusions:** Multimorbidity affected almost 90% of patients, with a median of five chronic diseases. Over
63 10% had ≥ 10 chronic diseases. This identification and quantification of frequent combinations of
64 comorbidities among multimorbid medical inpatients may increase awareness of what should be taken into
65 account when treating such patients, a growing in need of special care considerations.

66 **KEYWORDS:** multimorbidity; patterns; comorbidity; chronic diseases.

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71 **1. INTRODUCTION**

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73 With increasing life expectancy and improved healthcare, a higher proportion of adults develop
74 multimorbidity, which is associated with adverse health outcomes, higher healthcare utilization,
75 polypharmacy and worse quality of life (1-3). Multimorbidity, most often defined as the presence of two or
76 more chronic diseases, therefore represents a significant burden for healthcare systems and patients (4-7).
77 However, despite the importance of multimorbidity, little is known about the prevalence of the different
78 chronic diseases and of their combinations in multimorbid hospitalized patients.

79 While interest has increased in studying non-random combinations of diseases (8), most data are derived
80 from the ambulatory care settings (9-20). We found only two studies assessing such combinations in
81 inpatients (21, 22), but both studies included all diseases without distinguishing between acute and chronic
82 diseases, although multimorbidity refers specifically to chronic diseases (1, 3).

83 Using standardized tools to classify and categorize the diseases (23, 24), the primary aim was to identify
84 and quantify the most prevalent combinations of chronic diseases groups (comorbidities) in multimorbid
85 medical inpatients. Our hypothesis was that besides well-known frequent combinations of comorbidities
86 such as chronic heart disease and chronic kidney disease (CKD), other frequent combinations may be
87 identified among medical multimorbid hospitalized patients. The secondary aim was to describe the
88 relative proportions between acute and chronic diseases in multimorbid patients. Our hypothesis was that
89 the chronic diseases represent the majority of all patient diseases.

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93 **2. METHODS**

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95 **2.1. Study design, setting and participants**

96 We used a multicenter international retrospective cohort including all consecutive adults discharged alive
97 from the medical department of 10 academic and onenon-academic (Christiana Care Health System)
98 hospitals across three countries (seven in the USA, three in Switzerland and one in Israel) between 2010
99 and 2011 (Appendix A). Patients admitted to a surgical ward were not included. The US sites were part of a
100 collaborative research on quality of care, and the other institutions joined the group by interest and
101 through networking. Only multimorbid patients were included in all the analyses, i.e. those with two or
102 more chronic diseases based on the most common definition of multimorbidity (2, 25). The presence of an
103 acute disease in addition of the two or more chronic diseases was not an exclusion criterium. In order to
104 limit inclusion of observation stays, we further restricted the cohort to patients with a hospital length of
105 stay of at least one day. Moreover, as the initial data were collected to study hospital readmissions, only
106 patients discharged home or to a nursing home were included.

107 The Institutional Review Board of each participating site reviewed the study and determined it to be
108 non-human subjects research, as it involved secondary analysis of anonymized data.

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110 **2.2. Study variables and diseases categorization**

111 All data were extracted from electronic medical records and included demographic, admission,
112 hospitalization and discharge information, as well as International Classification of Diseases (ICD) diagnosis
113 codes available at discharge (ICD-9 codes for the USA and Israel, ICD-10 codes for Switzerland).

114 We assessed multimorbidity according to the following aspects, as detailed below: 1) acute and chronic
115 diseases; 2) categories of chronic diseases, defined as comorbidities; 3) body systems affected; 4)
116 comorbidity indices.

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2.2.1. Acute and chronic diseases

To differentiate between ICD codes for acute and chronic diseases, we used the Chronic Condition Indicator (CCI) developed by the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP), a Federal-State-Industry partnership sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (23). This tool defines a chronic disease as a condition lasting at least 12 months and meeting at least one of the following criteria: a) it places limitations on self-care, independent living, and social interactions; or b) it results in the need for ongoing intervention with medical products, services and special equipment. The use of the CCI had the following advantages: 1) standardized classification method that warrants a homogeneous analysis through a large database; 2) open source and ease-of-use that allow reproducibility; 3) development based on several peer-reviewed journal articles (26-28).

2.2.2. Comorbidities

Because the more than 14,000 ICD codes would make the analysis difficult to interpret in a clinically meaningful way, we grouped the different ICD codes into comorbidities using the Clinical Classification Software (CCS) from HCUP, which collapses all ICD codes into 285 mutually exclusive categories (24). Because we were interested in patterns of comorbidities related to multimorbidity, only chronic diseases were categorized. For this purpose, we thus excluded ICD codes for acute diseases, as well as CCS categories for risk factors for diseases, complications of diseases, screening strategies and symptoms, as previously done, because they do not refer to specific diseases (22). For clinical relevance, we further merged some comorbidities together (Appendix B). For example, we grouped together all chronic heart diseases, including cardiac dysrhythmias, coronary heart disease, non-hypertensive congestive heart failure and heart valve disorder. The different hospitals collected ICD codes which were then categorized by the first author using the above-mentioned tools.

142 **2.2.3. Body systems affected**

143 We further classified all diseases into 18 body system categories using the CCI: 1) infectious and parasitic
144 diseases; 2) neoplasms; 3) endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases, and immunity disorders; 4)
145 diseases of blood and blood-forming organs; 5) mental disorders; 6) diseases of the nervous system and
146 sense organs; 7) diseases of the circulatory system; 8) diseases of the respiratory system; 9) diseases of the
147 digestive system; 10) diseases of the genitourinary system; 11) complications of pregnancy, childbirth, and
148 the puerperium; 12) diseases of the skin and subcutaneous tissue; 13) diseases of the musculoskeletal
149 system; 14) congenital anomalies; 15) certain conditions originating in the perinatal period; 16) symptoms,
150 signs, and ill-defined conditions; 17) injury and poisoning; 18) factors influencing health status and contact
151 with health services.

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153 **2.2.4. Comorbidity indices**

154 We calculated the Deyo-Charlson Comorbidity Index and the Elixhauser-Van Walraven Comorbidity Index
155 based on enhanced ICD-9-CM and ICD-10 codes (Table A.1) (26, 29-32).

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157 **2.3. Statistical analyses**

158 We presented baseline characteristics as proportions for categorical variables and median with
159 interquartile range (IQR) for continuous variables. We described the prevalence of multimorbidity, the
160 number of patients with ≥ 10 chronic diseases and the median number of body systems affected. For our
161 primary aim, we first selected the main comorbidities showing a prevalence of more than 10% and then
162 identified the most prevalent comorbidities combined with each of them. We presented the observed
163 frequencies for each combination, and compared them with the frequency that would have been expected
164 if the two comorbidities were independent, calculated by multiplying the respective frequencies of each of
165 the two comorbidities in the whole cohort. The resulting ratio of the observed/expected frequencies thus
166 gives an indication on how dependent the two comorbidities are from each other. The combinations of

167 comorbidities were not exclusive, so that patients with more than two comorbidities were counted in each
168 combination of comorbidities that they presented. For example, a patient with chronic heart disease,
169 chronic kidney disease and thyroid disorders was counted in the three following combinations: 1) chronic
170 heart disease + chronic kidney disease, 2) chronic heart disease + thyroid disorders, and 3) chronic kidney
171 disease + thyroid disorders.

172 For our secondary aim, we used a two y-axis bar/line plot to display the distribution of acute and chronic
173 diseases and the median number of body systems affected in relationship to the total number of diseases.

174 All analyses were performed using STATA 15.1 (StataCorp LP, College Station, TX, USA) or R version 3.4.4 (R
175 Project for Statistical Computing).

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178 **3. RESULTS**

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180 **3.1. General description of multimorbidity**

181 Overall, 126828 (86%) of the 147806 medical inpatients were multimorbid and included for analysis.

182 Median age was 64 years (IQR 52, 76) with 52% (n=65631) men (**Table 1**). The median number of total

183 diseases (acute or chronic) was 10 (IQR 6, 14), with a median number of 5 (IQR 3, 8) chronic diseases and 4

184 (IQR 2, 5) body systems affected. We found that 16024 (13%) of the patients had ≥ 10 chronic diseases. We

185 found 10 comorbidities (groups of chronic comorbidities) with a prevalence of more than 10% (**Table 1**).

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187 **3.2. Most prevalent combinations of comorbidities**

188 The most prevalent combinations of comorbidities are presented in **Table 2**. The overall most prevalent

189 combination was chronic heart disease with CKD (12%, n=15050). Among patients with chronic heart

190 disease, 25% had CKD, while among those with CKD, 68% had chronic heart disease. Chronic heart disease

191 was the most frequent comorbidity found in all of these combinations, with a prevalence ranging from 27%

192 among patients with solid malignancy to 68% among those with CKD. Other frequent comorbidities

193 included mood disorders, arthropathy and arthritis, esophageal disorders (including gastro-esophageal

194 reflux), chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and bronchiectasis, and thyroid disorders.

195 Observed frequency was substantially higher than expected frequency for the following combinations:

196 chronic heart disease with CKD; chronic heart disease with pulmonary heart disease; CKD with peripheral

197 and visceral atherosclerosis; CKD with nephritis, nephrosis, renal sclerosis; mood disorders with substance-

198 related disorders; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and bronchiectasis with pulmonary heart disease;

199 substance-related disorders with esophageal disorders; substance-related disorders with liver disease. On

200 the opposite, observed frequency was substantially lower than expected frequency for following

201 combinations: chronic heart disease with solid malignancy; solid malignancy with substance-related

202 disorders.

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204 **3.3. Proportions of acute and chronic diseases**

205 Chronic diseases represented 64% of all ICD diagnosis codes in patients with multimorbidity. The
206 percentage of chronic versus acute diseases initially decreased as the total number of diseases increased,
207 from 100% chronic diseases in patients with two total diseases (by definition), to 71% in those with five
208 diseases (Figure 1). The percentages of chronic and acute diseases remained relatively stable as the number
209 of diseases further increased, with chronic diseases representing 64-73% of all diseases. The median
210 number of body systems affected increased proportionally with the number of diseases, and was about half
211 the total number of diseases.

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214 **4. DISCUSSION**

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216 In this large multinational study, we identified and quantified the most common combinations of
217 comorbidities in multimorbid medical inpatients. Multimorbidity affected the great majority of patients,
218 with a median of five chronic diseases per patient. The most common combination of comorbidities was, as
219 expected, chronic heart disease and CKD. Mood disorders, arthropathy and arthritis, and esophageal
220 disorders appeared to be very frequent comorbidities in combination with the most prevalent main
221 comorbidities. Many combinations were observed more frequently than expected. In patients with more
222 than five total diseases, chronic diseases represented two-thirds of the diseases. This study provides new
223 insight on chronic comorbidities among multimorbid medical inpatients, a group of patients so far not well-
224 studied.

225

226 **4.1. General description of multimorbidity**

227 The few previous studies in hospital settings reported a prevalence of multimorbidity of 63 to 99% (22, 33,
228 34). This wide range can be mostly explained by different age distributions and/or the definition of
229 multimorbidity, as only 23% of the patients were ≥ 65 years in the study with the lowest prevalence (22),
230 while the study with the highest prevalence included only patients aged ≥ 65 years (33). The 86% prevalence
231 in our population with a median age of 64 years is consistent with those findings and provides a more
232 precise estimate among a general population of medical inpatients.

233 Unlike previous studies that most often assessed multimorbidity either as a simple count of diseases or as a
234 weighted index, we used both measures, allowing us to compare them. Median Deyo-Charlson Comorbidity
235 Index and Elixhauser-Van Walraven Comorbidity Index were rather low (two and six respectively), despite
236 the median number of chronic diseases of five. Although these indices are broadly used in research settings
237 to assess and weight multimorbidity or to adjust for it in analyses, they were initially developed to predict
238 mortality and not to measure multimorbidity. The low values we found for these indices in our cohort

239 underline their low sensitivity to detect multimorbidity (35), suggesting that they may not be very accurate
240 to define multimorbidity or weight its severity, most likely because they only include a limited number of
241 conditions. However, further research should compare the ability of these scores and of other
242 measurements of multimorbidity to predict health outcomes or costs.

243

244 **4.2. Most prevalent combinations of comorbidities**

245 A novel approach of our study to assess combinations of comorbidities was to group chronic diseases
246 expected to cluster together and to exclude acute diseases, risk factors, complications, screening strategies
247 and symptoms, with the aim to focus on the chronic diseases contributing to multimorbidity. This allowed
248 us to identify combinations of comorbidities in a more clinically meaningful way. For example, CKD, mood
249 disorders, arthropathy and arthritis, esophageal disorders, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and
250 bronchiectasis, and thyroid disorders were frequently found in the combinations of comorbidities.
251 Furthermore, some combinations were found more frequently than expected, which could be because one
252 predisposes to the other, the two have common risk factors, or treatment for one causes the other. For
253 example, some were more common for obvious pathophysiologic reasons like chronic heart disease with
254 CKD, or because of a common precursor like smoking for the combination of chronic heart disease with
255 chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and bronchiectasis. But there were some unexpected combinations
256 and some cases where the combination was less common than would have been expected, such as chronic
257 heart disease with solid malignancy, which highlights that these two comorbidities are more independent
258 from each other, and therefore reflects more a fortuitously combination due to the high prevalence of both
259 comorbidities.

260 Although we cannot make conclusions about causality from this analysis, unmasking those combinations of
261 comorbidities offers a better understanding of the patterns of multimorbidity and could help to better
262 target interventions to improve outcomes of multimorbid patients. For example, the fact that almost one
263 fourth of patients with arthropathy and arthritis also had CKD outlines the importance of avoiding NSAIDs

264 as painkillers among patients with arthropathy and arthritis. Similarly, as 12% of patients with chronic heart
265 disease also have thyroid disorders, healthcare providers should try to avoid prescribing amiodarone to
266 patients with chronic heart disease or monitor the thyroid function. Quantifying the frequency of the most
267 prevalent combination of comorbidities of chronic heart disease and CKD is also noteworthy, as they have
268 been shown to be associated with worse outcomes such as in-hospital death (21, 36).
269 These findings are difficult to compare with the few previous studies conducted in inpatients because of
270 differences in data sources and multimorbidity assessment (21, 33, 34, 37). Those studies indeed either
271 used a different categorization system or included acute and chronic diseases, as well as symptoms and risk
272 factors. They thus described a high prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors, heart diseases and particular
273 symptoms, and of combinations between chronic heart diseases and cardiovascular risk factors.

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275 **4.3. Proportions of acute and chronic diseases**

276 In patients with more than five total diseases, the proportions of chronic versus acute diseases remained
277 quite stable with about two-thirds as chronic diseases. We could have expected an exponential increase of
278 the percentage of acute diseases, as patients with more chronic diseases may be more severely ill, which
279 was not the case. This suggests that the number of additional acute diseases is proportional to the number
280 of chronic diseases in patients with more than five diseases, possibly corresponding to the number of
281 chronic diseases susceptible to decompensation. The number of body systems affected was about half the
282 number of diseases, suggesting that some body systems include more diseases, with a median of two
283 diseases per body system affected. To our knowledge, this is the first study that assessed the distribution of
284 acute and chronic diseases and of body systems affected in multimorbid patients.

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286 **4.4. Clinical implications**

287 This study highlights the high prevalence of different combinations of comorbidities, and therefore the
288 importance of being able to gather all the necessary skills to treat patients in their whole, and not only one

289 disease at a time. This may contrast with the recent increase in medical ultra-specialization and the opening
290 of competence centers (e.g. chronic heart disease center). Although those centers frequently care for
291 multimorbid patients, they still often apply disease-specific guidelines that may not be appropriate for
292 multimorbid patients, as the latter are rarely included in trials used to develop these guidelines (38). Our
293 description of the different patterns of multimorbidity may increase awareness of what should be taken
294 into account when treating such patients. Furthermore, it outlines the necessity to develop specific
295 guidelines for multimorbid patients, and reveals which most prevalent combinations of comorbidities they
296 should focus on in priority.

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298 **4.5. Limitations and strengths**

299 Our study has several limitations. First, as for any study using electronic medical records, diagnoses are
300 subject to coding quality, and therefore we cannot exclude underreporting of some diseases. However, on
301 the other hand, using ICD codes allowed us to assess a broad range of diseases, unlike most previous
302 studies (1, 5, 39-41). Second, although we used an objective tool to classify the diseases, we further
303 grouped some categories and excluded ICD codes referring to risk factors, complications, screening
304 strategies and symptoms; while it was performed to unmask less expected associations, it may however
305 have brought some subjectivity and prevented some comparison with previous studies. Third, we
306 performed crude analyses, because we were interested in multimorbidity independently of other factors;
307 we thus cannot conclude on any subgroup difference, e.g. according to gender or age. Fourth, we cannot
308 exclude differences in coding across the hospitals from different countries and healthcare systems, which
309 may have brought some heterogeneity; however, such variability may turn out to increase results
310 generalizability, given that it makes them applicable to a higher number of different settings. Fifth,
311 although we restricted the cohort to patients with a length of stay of at least one day, we cannot
312 completely exclude the inclusion of some patients admitted for observation stay only, and who may
313 present different patterns of comorbidities than those admitted for inpatient care. Sixth, because the

314 cohort was initially built to study readmissions, we included only patients discharged home, so that our
315 results may not be generalized to patients who were discharged to another hospital or to a nursing home,
316 as well as to patients who died during hospital stay. Finally, some combinations may have been observed
317 only because of the high frequency of each comorbidity. However, this study did not have the pretention to
318 uncover causal associations, but only observed frequencies.

319 Our study also has several strengths. First, we used several methods to assess multimorbidity. In particular,
320 we differentiated acute from chronic diseases, since the number of diseases in the definition of
321 multimorbidity includes only chronic diseases and not acute diseases. Second, we used standardized tools
322 to classify ICD codes, allowing a more objective evaluation than self-reported diagnoses which were used in
323 up to 75% of previous reports (1). Third, unlike most studies on multimorbidity in hospital settings that
324 included only elderly patients (21, 33, 42), we included adults aged 18 years or older, allowing us to study
325 an unusually young inpatient population, and to underline that multimorbidity prevalence is already high in
326 such patients, probably because multimorbidity often already develops before the age of 65 years. Finally,
327 the large and multinational sample increases the generalizability of the results.

328

329 **5. CONCLUSIONS**

330 The great majority of medical inpatients were multimorbid with a median number of five chronic diseases
331 per multimorbid patient. In this study, we identified and quantified several interesting common
332 combinations of comorbidities besides the frequent well-known combination of chronic heart disease with
333 chronic kidney disease. Furthermore, we found that among patients with more than five diseases, about
334 two-thirds of the diseases were chronic. This large multinational study offers an innovative insight into the
335 patterns of multimorbidity in medical inpatients. Our findings may increase the awareness of healthcare
336 providers on the patterns of multimorbidity and highlight the importance to develop appropriate guidelines
337 for the high number of patients who cumulate common comorbidities.

338

339 **6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

340 CCI, Chronic Condition Indicator; CCS, Clinical Classification Software; CKD, chronic kidney disease; HCUP,
341 Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project; ICD, International Classification of Diseases.

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344 **7. DECLARATIONS**

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346 **Ethics approval and consent to participate:** The Institutional Review Board of each participating site
347 reviewed the study and determined it to be non-human subjects research, as it involved secondary
348 analysis of anonymized data.

349 **Consent for publication:** Not applicable.

350 **Competing interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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355 **Authors' contributions:** Carole E. Aubert and Jacques Donzé designed the study, directed its analysis,
356 including quality assurance and control, interpreted the data and drafted the article. Niklaus Fankhauser
357 and Andreas Limacher designed the study's analytic strategy and performed the statistical analyses. Jeffrey
358 L. Schnipper, Pedro Marques-Vidal, Jérôme Stirnemann, Andrew D. Auerbach, Eyal Zimlichman, Sunil
359 Kripalani, Eduard E. Vasilevskis, Edmondo Robinson, Joshua Metlay and Grant S. Fletcher contributed to
360 data collection. Jeffrey L. Schnipper contributed to major revisions of the manuscript. All authors critically
361 reviewed the manuscript and agreed for submission.

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363 **Availability of data and materials:** All data generated or analysed during this study are included in this
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466

467 **Table 1.** Baseline characteristics.

Characteristics	Multimorbid cohort (n=126828)
Age, years, median (IQR)	64 (52, 76)
Men, n (%)	65631 (52)
<i>Country</i>	
United States, n (%)	82937 (65)
Switzerland, n (%)	33871 (27)
Israel, n (%)	10020 (8)
<i>Description of multimorbidity</i>	
Number of acute and chronic diseases, median (IQR)	10 (6, 14)
Number of chronic diseases, median (IQR)	5 (3, 8)
Number of body systems affected, median (IQR)	4 (2, 5)
Deyo-Charlson Comorbidity Index, median (IQR) ¹	2 (1, 3)
Elixhauser-Van Walraven Comorbidity Index, median (IQR) ²	6 (1, 12)
<i>Most prevalent comorbidities (prevalence ≥10%)</i>	
Chronic heart disease, n (%)	60298 (48)
Chronic kidney disease, n (%)	22210 (18)
Mood disorders, n (%)	18932 (15)
Arthropathy and arthritis, n (%)	18348 (15)
Solid malignancy, n (%)	18045 (14)
Esophageal disorders, n (%)	17864 (14)
Other nervous system disorders, n (%)	16349 (13)
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and bronchiectasis, n (%)	14696 (12)
Thyroid disorders, n (%)	14640 (12)
Substance-related disorders, n (%)	12863 (10)
<i>Hospitalization characteristics</i>	
Length of stay, days, median (IQR)	5 (3, 8)
Number of admissions in the past year	0 (0, 2)

468 ¹ Score range: 0 to 33 points.469 ² Score range: -19 to 89 points.

470

471 **Table 2.** Observed and expected frequencies of the most prevalent combinations of comorbidities in multimorbid
 472 patients (n=126828).

Combination of comorbidities	Observed number, n (%) ¹	Observed overall prevalence, % ²	Expected prevalence, % ³	Observed/Expected ratio
Chronic heart disease (n=60,298), combined with				
Chronic kidney disease	15050 (25)	11.8	8.3	1.4
Arthropathy and arthritis	9284 (15)	7.3	6.9	1.1
Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and bronchiectasis	9069 (15)	7.2	5.5	1.3
Esophageal disorders	8156 (14)	6.4	6.7	1.0
Thyroid disorders	7927 (13)	6.3	5.5	1.1
Mood disorders	7322 (12)	5.8	7.1	0.8
Other nervous system disorders	6926 (12)	5.5	6.1	0.9
Pulmonary heart disease	5863 (10)	4.6	2.8	1.6
Solid malignancy	4940 (8)	3.9	6.7	0.6
Peripheral and visceral atherosclerosis	4400 (7)	3.5	2.3	1.5
Chronic kidney disease (n=22,210), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	15050 (68)	11.8	8.3	1.4
Arthropathy and arthritis	4294 (19)	3.4	2.5	1.4
Other nervous system disorders	3332 (15)	2.6	2.3	1.1
Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and bronchiectasis	3212 (15)	2.5	2.0	1.3
Thyroid disorders	3125 (14)	2.5	2.0	1.1
Esophageal disorders	3039 (14)	2.4	2.5	1.0
Mood disorders	2754 (12)	2.2	2.6	0.8
Pulmonary heart disease	2373 (11)	1.9	1.0	1.9
Peripheral and visceral atherosclerosis	2155 (10)	1.7	0.8	2.1
Nephritis, nephrosis, renal sclerosis	2118 (10)	1.7	0.5	3.4
Mood disorders (n=18,932), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	7322 (39)	5.8	7.1	0.8
Esophageal disorders	4058 (21)	3.2	2.1	1.5
Other nervous system disorders	3929 (21)	3.1	1.9	1.6
Substance-related disorders	3497 (19)	2.8	1.5	1.9
Arthropathy and arthritis	3147 (17)	2.5	2.2	1.1
Thyroid disorders	2909 (15)	2.3	1.7	1.4
Chronic kidney disease	2754 (15)	2.2	2.6	0.8
Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and bronchiectasis	2571 (14)	2.0	1.7	1.2
Solid malignancy	1888 (10)	1.5	2.1	0.7
Asthma	1861 (10)	1.5	1.0	1.5
Arthropathy and arthritis (n=18,348), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	9284 (51)	7.3	6.9	1.1
Chronic kidney disease	4294 (23)	3.4	2.5	1.4
Esophageal disorders	3839 (21)	3.1	2.0	1.6
Mood disorders	3147 (17)	2.5	2.2	1.1

Other nervous system disorders	3122 (17)	2.5	1.9	1.3
Thyroid disorders	2798 (15)	2.2	1.7	1.3
Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and bronchiectasis	2288 (13)	1.8	1.7	1.0
Chronic ulcer of skin	1662 (9)	1.3	0.8	1.6
Asthma	1572 (9)	1.2	0.9	1.3
Osteoporosis	1290 (7)	1.1	0.6	1.8
Solid malignancy (n=18,045), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	4940 (27)	3.9	6.7	0.6
Other nervous system disorders	2586 (16)	2.0	1.8	1.1
Esophageal disorders	2212 (12)	1.7	2.0	0.9
Mood disorders	1888 (11)	1.5	2.1	0.7
Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and bronchiectasis	1864 (10)	1.3	1.6	0.9
Thyroid disorders	1651 (9)	1.3	1.6	0.8
Chronic kidney disease	1618 (9)	1.3	2.5	0.5
Arthropathy and arthritis	1415 (8)	1.1	2.1	0.5
Diseases of white blood cells	1328 (7)	1.0	0.8	1.3
Substance-related disorders	1050 (6)	0.8	1.4	0.6
Esophageal disorders (n= 17,864), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	8156 (46)	6.4	6.7	1.0
Mood disorders	4058 (23)	3.2	2.1	1.5
Arthropathy and arthritis	3829 (22)	3.1	2.0	1.6
Chronic kidney disease	3039 (17)	2.4	2.5	1.0
Other nervous system disorders	3004 (17)	2.4	1.8	1.3
Thyroid disorders	2768 (16)	2.2	1.6	1.4
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and bronchiectasis	2652 (15)	2.1	1.6	1.3
Solid malignancy	2212 (12)	1.7	2.0	0.9
Asthma	1941 (11)	1.5	0.9	1.7
Substance-related disorders	1916 (11)	1.5	1.4	1.1
Other nervous system disorders (n=16,349), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	6926 (42)	5.5	6.1	0.9
Mood disorders	3929 (24)	3.1	1.9	1.6
Chronic kidney disease	3332 (21)	2.6	2.3	1.1
Arthropathy and arthritis	3122 (19)	2.5	1.9	1.3
Esophageal disorders	3004 (18)	2.4	1.8	1.3
Thyroid disorders	2059 (13)	1.6	1.5	1.1
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and bronchiectasis	2008 (12)	1.6	1.5	1.1
Substance-related disorders	1971 (12)	1.6	1.3	1.2
Chronic ulcer of skin	1622 (10)	1.3	0.7	1.9
Asthma	1243 (8)	1.0	0.7	1.4
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and bronchiectasis (n=14,696), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	9069 (62)	7.2	5.5	1.3
Chronic kidney disease	3212 (22)	2.5	2.0	1.3
Esophageal disorders	2652 (18)	2.1	1.6	1.3
Mood disorders	2571 (18)	2.0	1.7	1.2

Arthropathy and arthritis	2288 (16)	1.8	1.7	1.1
Substance-related disorders	2089 (14)	1.7	1.2	1.4
Other nervous system disorders	2008 (14)	1.6	1.5	1.1
Thyroid disorders	1967 (13)	1.6	1.5	1.1
Solid malignancy	1864 (13)	1.5	1.6	0.9
Pulmonary heart disease	1833 (13)	1.5	0.7	2.1
Thyroid disorders (n=14,640), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	7927 (54)	6.3	5.5	1.1
Chronic kidney disease	3125 (21)	2.5	2.0	1.3
Mood disorders	2909 (20)	2.3	1.7	1.4
Arthropathy and arthritis	2798 (19)	2.2	1.7	1.3
Esophageal disorders	2768 (19)	2.2	1.6	1.4
Other nervous system disorders	2059 (14)	1.6	1.5	1.1
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and bronchiectasis	1967 (13)	1.6	1.5	1.1
Solid malignancy	1651 (11)	1.3	1.6	0.8
Dementia	1271 (9)	1.0	0.7	1.4
Pulmonary heart disease	1191 (8)	0.9	0.7	1.3
Substance-related disorders (n=12,863), combined with				
Chronic heart disease	4367 (34)	3.4	4.8	0.7
Mood disorders	3497 (27)	2.8	1.5	1.9
Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and bronchiectasis	2089 (16)	1.7	1.2	1.2
Other nervous system disorders	1971 (15)	1.6	1.3	1.2
Esophageal disorders	1916 (15)	1.5	1.4	1.1
Liver disease	1668 (13)	1.3	0.5	2.6
Chronic ulcer of skin	1331 (10)	1.1	0.6	1.8
Chronic kidney disease	1299 (10)	1.0	1.8	0.6
Arthropathy and arthritis	1275 (10)	1.0	1.5	0.7
Solid malignancy	1050 (8)	0.8	1.4	0.6

473 **Legend:** The combinations of comorbidities were not exclusive, so that patients with more than two comorbidities were counted in each
474 combination of comorbidities that they presented.

475 ¹ Among the patients with the main comorbidity (bold).

476 ² Among the whole multimorbid cohort (n=126828).

477 ³ Calculated by multiplying the observed frequencies of each of the two comorbidities among the whole multimorbid cohort (n=126828).

478

479 **FIGURE TITLE AND LEGEND**

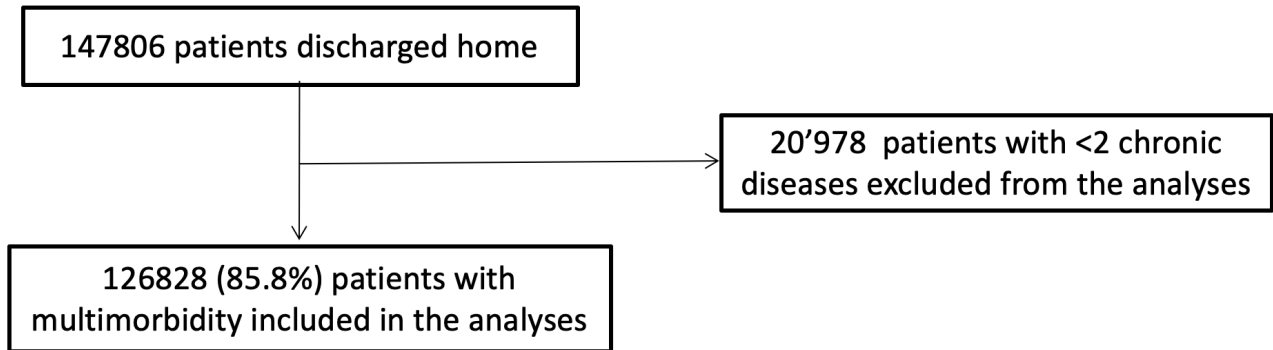
480 **Figure 1.**

481 **Title:** Proportions of acute versus chronic diseases in multimorbid patients (n=126828).

482 **Legend:** Percentages displayed in the grey bars are the percentages of chronic diseases for each particular
483 total number of diseases. The line represents the number of body systems affected.

484

485



486