

# Family Conflict and Chronic Illness Management

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## CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### Units of Analysis of an Eco-system

1. Community
2. Environments
3. Organization of relationships

## CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### Units of Analysis of an Eco-system

1. Patient and Chum/Blonde
2. Biological, Psychosocial Environments
3. Conflict in the relationship

## CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Treatment of most chronic illnesses is often the responsibility of the patient

Lifestyle and role changes

Potential strain on the couple and family relationships

## CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Importance of the quality of the relationship  
with the spouse/partner

Especially among patients with more than one  
chronic health condition

## WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

Family achievement orientation, low conflict, and organization predicts blood glucose control among diabetics

Family's expression and management of emotion--conflict resolution, intimacy, anger, loss-- have been linked to Chronic Illness Management

## WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

Married or coupled adults have lower prevalence of illness and recover more quickly than adults living alone

## FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Structure of the relationship between family conflict, number of chronic health problems, and chronic illness management among adult patients



## HYPOTHESES

Chronic illness management is poor among:

Patients who live alone

Patients with conflicted spouse/partner relationship

Patients with multiple chronic health problems

## METHODS

Data: QHS 1998

Patients: N= 5558

## METHODS

### Independent Variables

#### Marital Status

##### Difficulty in the relationship:

Spouse/partner doesn't understand you

Spouse/Partner doesn't show affection

Spouse/partner is not involved in the relationship

## METHODS

### Independent Variables

Number of Chronic Health Problems (one or more than one)

### Control Variables

Age, gender, education, employment, income

## METHODS

Dependent Variables: Chronic Illness  
Management

Consulting a GP (No/Yes)

Consulting a Specialist

Consulting Other Health Professionals

Use of telephone health line

## METHODS

Dependent Variables: Chronic Illness  
Management

Self-Rated General Health (High/Low)

Self-Rated Mental Health (High/Low)

Psychological Distress (Low/High)

## METHODS

### Logistic Regressions

Conservative approach to significance testing  
 $p < .01$

Focus on confidence intervals

## **Marital Status**

## **Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

### *Psychological Distress*

**Married**

Reference

**Common Law**

1.39 (1.14-1.69)

**Div/Sep/Wid**

1.65 (1.23-2.19)

**Single**

1.67 (1.27-2.20)



**Difficulty with  
Spouse/partner**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Consulting a General Physician*

<b>None</b>	Reference
<b>Some</b>	1.00 (0.78- 1.29)
<b>Average</b>	1.14 (0.85-1.52)
<b>Severe</b>	1.58 (1.21-2.07)

# Difficulty with Spouse/partner

## Odds Ratio (95%CI)

### *Use of Telephone Health Line*

<b>None</b>	Reference
<b>Some</b>	0.75 (0.62-0.91)
<b>Average</b>	0.76 (0.60-0.96)
<b>Severe</b>	0.77 (0.61-0.98)

## **Difficulty with Spouse/partner**

## **Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

### *Self-Rated General Health*

<b>None</b>	Reference
<b>Some</b>	1.44 (1.09-1.89)
<b>Average</b>	1.50 (1.10-2.05)
<b>Severe</b>	2.04 (1.52-2.72)

## **Difficulty with Spouse/partner**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

### *Self-Rated Mental Health*

<b>None</b>	Reference
<b>Some</b>	2.33 (1.73-3.13)
<b>Average</b>	3.12 (2.27-4.28)
<b>Severe</b>	5.16 (3.84-6.93)

**Difficulty with  
Spouse/partner**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Psychological Distress*

<b>None</b>	Reference
<b>Some</b>	2.42 (1.96-2.99)
<b>Average</b>	3.59 (2.83-4.55)
<b>Severe</b>	5.71 (4.49-7.26)

**Number of Chronic  
Health Problems**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Consulting a General Physician*

**One**

Reference

**More than one**

1.79 (1.49-2.15)

**Number of Chronic  
Health Problems**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Consulting a Specialist*

**One**

Reference

**More than one**

2.36 (1.82-3.06)

**Number of Chronic  
Health Problems**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Consulting Other Health Professionals*

**One**

Reference

**More than one**

2.04 (1.78-2.33)



**Number of Chronic  
Health Problems**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Use of Telephone Health Line*

**One**

Reference

**More than one**

0.79 (0.69-0.91)

**Number of Chronic  
Health Problems**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Self-Rated General Health*

**One**

Reference

**More than one**

4.43 (3.44-5.70)

**Number of Chronic  
Health Problems**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Self-Rated Mental Health*

**One**

Reference

**More than one**

2.74 (2.11-3.55)

**Number of Chronic  
Health Problems**

**Odds Ratio (95%CI)**

*Psychological Distress*

**One**

Reference

**More than one**

1.60 (1.36-1.89)

## DISCUSSION

### Limitations of the study

Cross-Sectional

Measure of Family Conflict

Measure of Co-morbidity

Multiple Testing

## DISCUSSION

### Preliminary Study Results

Patients who live alone may not necessarily perform poorly in managing their illness--but they report higher psychological distress

## DISCUSSION

Patients reporting difficulty in their relationship with their spouse/partner are more likely to have lower perception of their health

Patients reporting difficulty in their relationship with their spouse/partner are more likely to report higher psychological distress

## DISCUSSION

Patients reporting difficulty in their relationship with their spouse/partner are less likely to use Info-Santé



## DISCUSSION

Patients with more than one chronic health problem are more likely to use health services (GP, Specialist, Other HP)

Patients with more than one chronic health problem are more likely to have lower perception of their health

## DISCUSSION

Patients with more than one chronic health problem are more likely to report higher psychological distress

Patients with more than one chronic health problem are less likely to use Info-Santé

## DISCUSSION

### Avenues for intervention

1. Improve understanding of what makes a good couple relationship (does being married provide more consistent support?)
2. Target interventions to relationships not just individuals

## DISCUSSION

### Avenues for intervention

3. Improve understanding of the phenomenon of multiple morbidities

4. Proactive role of Info-Santé?

## CONCLUSION

Units of Analysis of an eco-system:  
A useful strategy

Importance of the quality of the  
relationship with the spouse/partner

Patients with multiple chronic health  
problems +++

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