

## **Knowledge, Attitude and Beliefs Towards Polypharmacy Amongst Older People Attending Family Medicine Clinic at the Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi, Kenya (AKUHN) Sub-Saharan Africa-Qualitative Study**

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**Abstract :** Life expectancy has increased over the last century amongst older individuals, and in particular, those 60 years and over. The World Health Organization estimates that the world's population of persons over 60 years will rise to 22 per cent by the year 2050. Ageing is associated with increasing disability, multiple chronic conditions, and an increase in the use of health services. These multiple chronic conditions are managed with polypharmacy. Polypharmacy has numerous adverse effects including non-adherence, poor compliance to the various medications, reduced appetite, and risk of fall. Studies on polypharmacy and ageing are few and poorly understood especially in low and middle - income countries. The aim of this study was to explore the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of older people towards polypharmacy. A qualitative study of 15 patients aged 60 years and above, taking more than five medications per day were conducted at the Aga Khan University using Semi-structured in-depth interviews. Three interviews were pilot interviews, and data analysis was performed on 12 interviews. Data were analyzed using NVIVO 12 software. A thematic qualitative analysis was carried out guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) framework. Themes identified; - knowledge of their co-morbidities and of the medication that older persons take, sources of information about medicines, and storage of the medication, experiences and attitudes of older patients towards polypharmacy both positive and negative, older peoples beliefs and their coping mechanisms with polypharmacy. The study participants had good knowledge on their multiple co-morbidities, and on the medication they took. The patients had positive attitudes towards medication as it enhanced their health and well-being, and enabled them to perform their activities of daily living. There was a strong belief among older patients that the medications were necessary for their health. All these factors enhanced compliance to the multiple medication. However, some older patients had negative attitudes due to the pill burden, side effects of the medication, and stigma associated with being ill. Cost of healthcare was a concern, with most of the patients interviewed relying on insurance to cover the cost of their medication. Older patients had accepted that the medication they were prescribed were necessary for their health, as it enabled them to complete their activities of daily living. Some concerns about the side effects of the medication arose, and brought about the need for patient education that would ensure that the patients are aware of the medications they take, and potential side effects. The effect that the COVID 19 pandemic had in the healthcare of the older patients was evident by the number of the older patients avoided coming to the hospital during the period of the pandemic. The relationship with the primary care physician and the older patients is an important one, especially in LMICs such as Kenya, as many of the older patients trusted the doctors wholeheartedly to make the best decision about their health and about their medication. Prescription review is important to avoid the use of potentially inappropriate medication.

**Keywords :** polypharmacy, older patients, multiple chronic conditions, Kenya, Africa, qualitative study, indepth interviews, primary care

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