

Explaining the Role of Iran Health System in Polypharmacy among the Elderly

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Abstract : Taking unnecessary or excessive medication or using drugs with no indication (polypharmacy) by people of all ages, especially the elderly, is associated with increased adverse drug reactions (ADR), medical errors, hospitalization and escalating the costs. It may be facilitated or impeded by the healthcare system. In this study, we are going to describe the role of the health system in the practice of polypharmacy in Iranian elderly. In this Inductive qualitative content analysis using Graneheim and Lundman methods, purposeful sample selection until saturation has been made. Participants have been selected from doctors, pharmacists, policy-makers and the elderly. A total of 25 persons (9 men and 16 women) have participated in this study. Data analysis after incorporating codes with similar characteristics revealed 14 subcategories and six main categories of the referral system, physicians' accessibility, health data management, drug market, laws enforcement, and social protection. Some of the conditions of the healthcare system have given rise to polypharmacy in the elderly. In the absence of a comprehensive specialty and subspecialty referral system, patients may go to any physician office so may well be confused about numerous doctors' prescriptions. Electronic records not being prepared for the patients, failure to comply with laws, lack of robust enforcement for the existing laws and close surveillance are among the contributing factors. Inadequate insurance and supportive services are also evident. Age-specific care providing has not yet been institutionalized, while, inadequate specialist workforce playing a major role. So, one may not ignore the health system as contributing factor in designing effective interventions to fix the problem.

Keywords : elderly, polypharmacy, health system, qualitative study

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