

REGIONAL MULTIMORBIDITY: a neglected burden on primary healthcare in Australia

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CONTEXT AND AIMS:

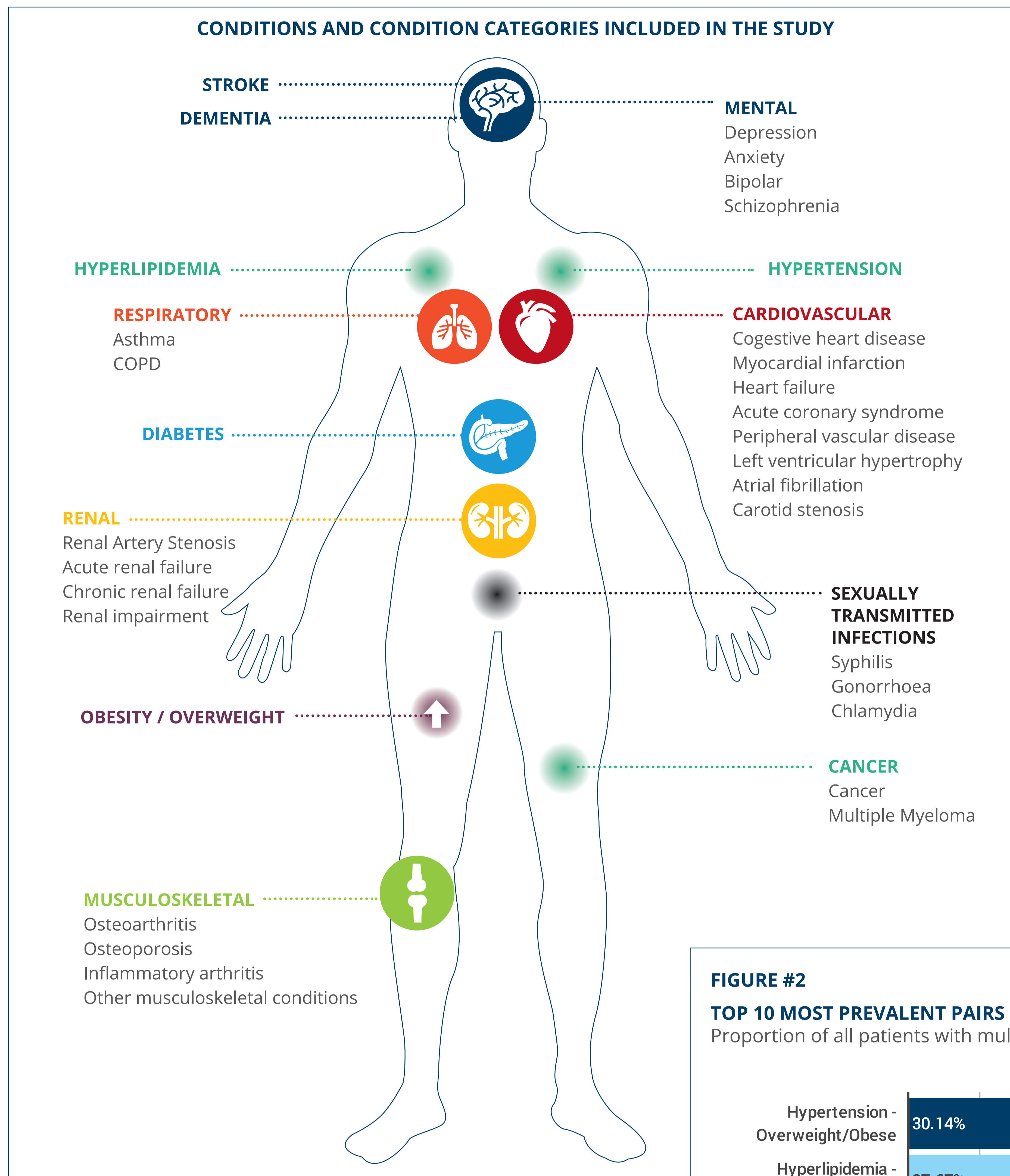
Reliable figures on multimorbidity prevalence are rarely reported for health administrative boundaries in Australia. Lack of region-specific estimates prevents peak healthcare bodies from conducting comprehensive evidence-based health services planning. This paper reports on the burden of multimorbidity within patients accessing general practitioner services in a regional area of NSW.

METHODS:

Cross-sectional secondary data analysis was undertaken on a subset of a previously configured data-set that included information on disease status of various common conditions for all adult patients that had visited 17 general practices located in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region of NSW, between September 2011 and September 2013. 36 major conditions were grouped into 13 categories and prevalence of multimorbidity was calculated.

FINDINGS:

The data subset yielded information on n = 118,794 adults. Over a quarter of patients (27.8%, 95% CI: 27.5% - 28.1%) had two or more condition categories and prevalence was slightly higher (p-value=0.015) in men (28.2%) than women (27.5%), and highest in the 75 years and over age group (67.6%; OR = 47.4, 95% CI: 43.5 - 51.7, adjusted for sex and socio-economic disadvantage). Hypertension and Overweight/Obese was the most prevalent pair of coexisting condition categories.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

- Multimorbidity is a significant burden on primary care.
- Clinical guidelines in Australia need to incorporate changes so as to address the management of multiple conditions in primary care rather than having an individual disease-based approach.
- Smaller health administrative area-specific prevalence figures of multimorbidity drawn from general practice databases could inform tailored locally specific strategies.

FIGURE #1
MULTIMORBIDITY PREVALENCE CONDITION CATEGORIES

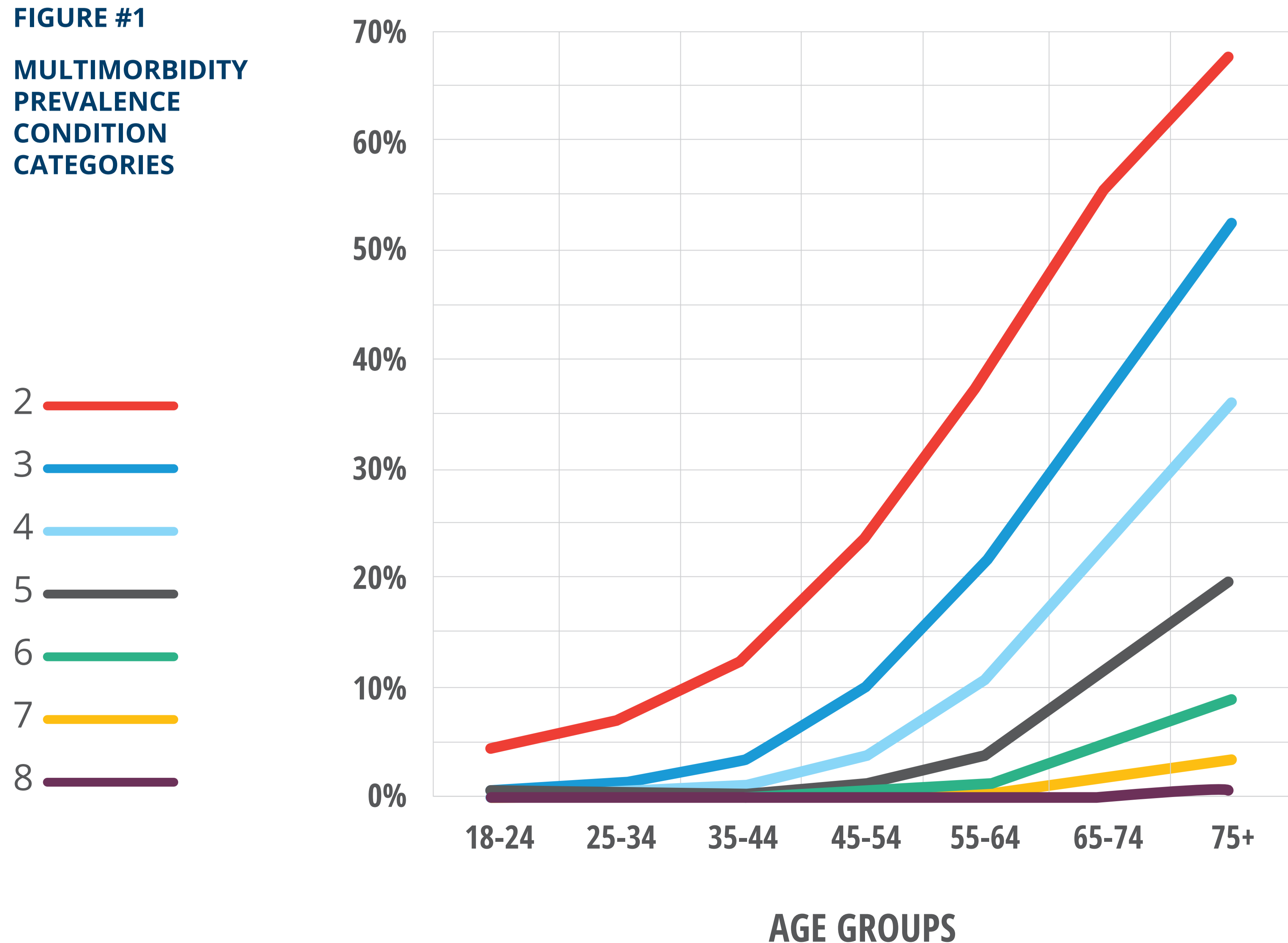


FIGURE #2

TOP 10 MOST PREVALENT PAIRS OF CONDITION CATEGORIES
Proportion of all patients with multimorbidity

