Geriatrics Gerontology International

DOI: 10.1111/ggi.14070

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

EPIDEMIOLOGY, CLINICAL PRACTICE AND HEALTH

Impact of the interaction between mild and mild-to-moderate cognitive impairment with chronic health problems on hospital admission among community-dwelling older adults

Reza Amini and Bushra Kawser

Department of Public Health and Health Sciences, University of Michigan-Flint, Flint, Michigan, USA

Correspondence
Reza Amini, PhD, MD, MPH, Department of Public Health and Health Sciences, University of Michigan-Flint, 303 Kearsley St., Flint, MI 48502, USA.
Email: dramini@umich.edu

Received: 21 August 2020
Revised: 23 September 2020
Accepted: 4 October 2020

Aim: This study aims to examine the effect of concurrent mild and mild-to-moderate cognitive impairment with chronic diseases on hospital admission (HA) among community-dwelling older adults.

Method: The National Health and Aging Trends Study (2011–2018), with 1225 respondents (each wave), were used. The number of HAs within 1 year was the outcome. Clock drawing test, delayed word recall test, self-reported chronic diseases and their interactions were the independent variables.

Results: The effect of cognitive impairment on the frequency of HAs varies for executive function and memory impairment. Executive function impairment concurrent with the history of heart attack or diabetes mellitus (DM) can increase the risk of HAs. Memory impairment concurrent with hypertension, DM or stroke can increase the chance of HAs.

Conclusion: Screening to identify mild and mild-to-moderate cognitive impairment at the time of admission can help to reduce the risk of rehospitalization, particularly for patients with DM, hypertension, stroke and heart attack. **Geriatr Gerontol Int 2020; 20: 1213–1220**.

Keywords: dementia, health problems, hospital admission, mild cognitive impairment.

Introduction

Any defect in one or more of the main components of cognitive function (CF) (i.e., memory, visuospatial function, language, attention and executive function [EF]) may develop some signs and symptoms of cognitive impairment, which is also known as mild cognitive impairment and associated with aging.[1] Approximately 10–15% of cases with mild cognitive impairment transit to Alzheimer's disease (AD) or other types of neurocognitive disorders (dementia).[2,3] Considering that the population of people diagnosed with AD is projected to surpass 10 million in 2050, the number of mild cognitive impairment cases is projected to surpass 70 million in 2050 in the USA.[4,5] Besides, mild cognitive impairment cases are more susceptible to repeated hospital admissions (HAs)[6] when, conversely, HAs can trigger cognitive impairment among older adults living in the community.[7] Consequently, HAs are expected to rise in the next decades, as chronic health problems, in particular neurocognitive disorders, are prevalent among older adults.[8] Hence, policymakers and clinical professionals need to understand the trajectory of HAs among people with mild and mild-to-moderate cognitive impairment and the interactions between cognitive impairment and chronic health problems.

The more severe the cognitive impairment, the more frequent HAs will be.[9] In addition, their survival time after discharge from hospital is approximately half of people without neurocognitive disorders.[10] People with neurocognitive disorders are more susceptible to be hospitalized due to trauma, infections, neurologic, psychiatric, orthopedic and respiratory health problems.[11]

Many chronic health problems are correlated with cognitive impairment. Diabetes mellitus (DM) can increase the cytokines that increase inflammation in the central nervous system. Furthermore, dysregulation of glucose homeostasis, changes in the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis, and obesity can synergize the adverse effect of high blood sugar on both EF and memory.[12] It is also evident that cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disorders can increase the risk of cognitive impairment through different pathophysiologic pathways, including damage to the white matter due to high blood pressure and stroke.[13,14] Chronic lung diseases are associated with cognitive impairment.[15] The correlation between cognitive impairment and chronic health problems, DM, cardiovascular disorders and stroke, can increase the risk of frequent HAs.[16–18] Hence, we hypothesize that the effect of these concurrent health problems and mild and mild-to-moderate cognitive impairment can increase the risk of frequent HAs compared with those older adults with normal CF without these health problems when previous studies did not control for the interactions between levels of cognitive impairment and chronic health problems.

Methods

This study used the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS), which surveys age-eligible (i.e., ≥65 years) Medicare beneficiaries using stratified sampling in three stages to develop a nationally representative sample. In the first stage, the primary sample units were formed by selecting a group of counties in each state. In the second phase, the ZIP codes within each selected county/group of counties were selected; then, in the third stage, based on the proportion of race and ethnicity and age groups in each ZIP code, the participants were selected.[19] In 2011, the weighted response rate was >71%, with 8245 complete surveys.[20]

Following 2011, the same group of participants was invited to the annual survey. This study used eight waves of NHATS (2011–2018), which were appended then balanced by excluding those participants who had not participated in all eight waves. Participants with moderate, moderate to severe and severe clock drawing test (CDT) were excluded from the dataset. In addition, participants diagnosed with dementia were excluded from the regression models. Considering that rehospitalization is more common among older adults with cognitive impairment who live in the community,[9] this study included only community-dwelling older adults in all eight waves (n = 9800, 1225 per wave).

Measurement

The dependent variable of this study was the number of HAs within 12 months before the time of surveys. All the participants were asked if they had any overnight hospital stays within the last 12 months (>93% agreement with claim data[21]). If they responded "yes," they were asked how many times they had stayed in a hospital for at least one night. If the respondents answered "no" to the previous question, the number of HAs was considered zero. The response to the latter question was considered as the number of HAs. These two variables were combined to form one variable as the number of HAs.

The EF and memory were the dependent variables for the first set of regression analyses (chronic health issues predicting CF). EF and memory were independent variables for the second set of regression analyses predicting the frequency of HAs. The CDT was used to measure the EF[22] and the delayed word recall test (DWRT) for memory function.[19]

The score of CDT was categorized from 0 to 5, the least to the most accurate; then, it was reverse coded as 0 indicated no EF impairment (normal CDT) to 5 indicated very severe EF impairment. Those participants with normal, mild and mild-to-moderate (0, 1 and 2 respectively) remained in the dataset.

DWRT with three 10-word lists were used to measure memory; before performing the CDT, participants listened to the randomly assigned word list. After the CDT, they were asked to repeat the words. The number of correct words was counted, and the results were categorized into three levels: <5 as severe memory impairment (100% sensitivity and specificity), 5–6 mild memory impairment (93.0 and 90.3 sensitivity and specificity, respectively), and ≥7 as normal memory.[23] Then these categories were reversed coded when 0 indicated no memory impairment, 1 mild memory and 2 severe memory impairment.

All of the respondents (self-response, no proxy) were asked if they had been diagnosed with DM, hypertension, heart diseases, lung diseases, dementia and cancer. Individuals having a heart attack, stroke, fall events during the past 12 months were asked to identify the incidence of health issues between waves. The ability to walk six blocks every day was considered as the level of activity and function as it was significantly correlated with HAs (incidence rate ratio = 0.608, $P < 0.001$).

Ethnicity was categorized into four groups: non-Hispanic white, Hispanics, African Americans and others. For each category, a dummy variable was created, and non-Hispanic white people were the reference group in all analyses. Living status was a binary variable as those respondents living with their spouse, a partner, or someone other than a partner, compared with those living alone.

Statistical analysis

The longitudinal ordered logistic regression was used to examine the correlation between chronic health problems and CF. As the number of HA was a count variable and 82.70% of the participants had zero HA within the last 12 months at the time of interview, the effects of overdispersion (i.e., response variance greater than the mean) could cause the underestimation of the errors. Therefore, longitudinal zero-inflated models were more appropriate than other count models. The Vuong test and coefficient of alpha were used to choose between longitudinal zero-inflated negative binomial (xtzinb) and longitudinal zero-inflated Poisson (xtzip). As the Vuong test of none of the models was statistically significant, xtzip was employed for all the regression models (CF predicting HA).[24]

Results

Across all waves, >80% of the participants had no HAs within 12 months before the survey, followed by one admission per year (12.49%). The results of the CDT showed that 20.24% of the participants had mild-to-moderate EF impairment in 2011. This rate dropped to 11.27% in 2016 then increased to 14.20% in 2018. The rate of participants with mild EF impairment decreased from 51.27% in 2011 to 39.18% in 2018, with some fluctuations in between. Normal EF was a little different as it had an upward trend starting with 28.49% in 2011, rising to 46.61% in 2018 (Fig. 1a). Contrarily, normal memory showed a downward trend throughout the eight waves. As the participants grew older, the rate of heart disease, hypertension, DM and lung disease increased (Fig. 1b, Table 1).

Concerning the correlation between chronic health problems and CF, those participants who had a history of heart attack and DM were approximately 50% (odds ratio [OR] = 1.50, $P = 0.008$) and 30% (OR = 1.30, $P = 0.007$) more likely to have mild or mild-to-moderate EF impairment, respectively. Those participants with a history of hypertension, DM and/or stroke were 46% (OR = 1.46, $P = 0.001$), 33% (OR = 1.33, $P = 0.028$) and 65% (OR = 1.65, $P = 0.015$) more likely to have mild and severe memory impairment, respectively.

Hospital admissions and executive function

Participants with mild and mild-to-moderate EF impairment were approximately 9% more likely to have more frequent HAs. All of the chronic health problems increased the risk of frequent HAs, all of which were statistically significant (i.e., heart attack 46%, heart disease 62%, hypertension 26%, DM 22%, lung diseases 20%, stroke 53%, cancer 44%). Falling within the last 12 months increased the possibility of repeated HAs by 33%. In contrast, the ability to walk six blocks could reduce the risk of frequent HAs by 34% (Table 3, Model 1).

Concerning demographics, a 1-year increase in age could increase the risk of repeated HAs by 2%. Hispanics and African Americans were more likely to have repeated HAs compared with non-Hispanic white people. In the inflated section of the model, walking six blocks could increase the chance of zero HAs significantly (Table 3, Model 1).

Considering Model 1 in Table 2, the interactions between EF and heart attack and EF and DM were examined in two different models.

Heart attack alone can be a significant predictor of HAs. Among participants with normal EF, those who had a heart attack were approximately 71% more likely to have frequent HAs compared with normal EF without heart attack. Concurrent mild EF impairment and heart attack can increase the risk of frequent HAs by 44% compared with those with normal EF without a history of

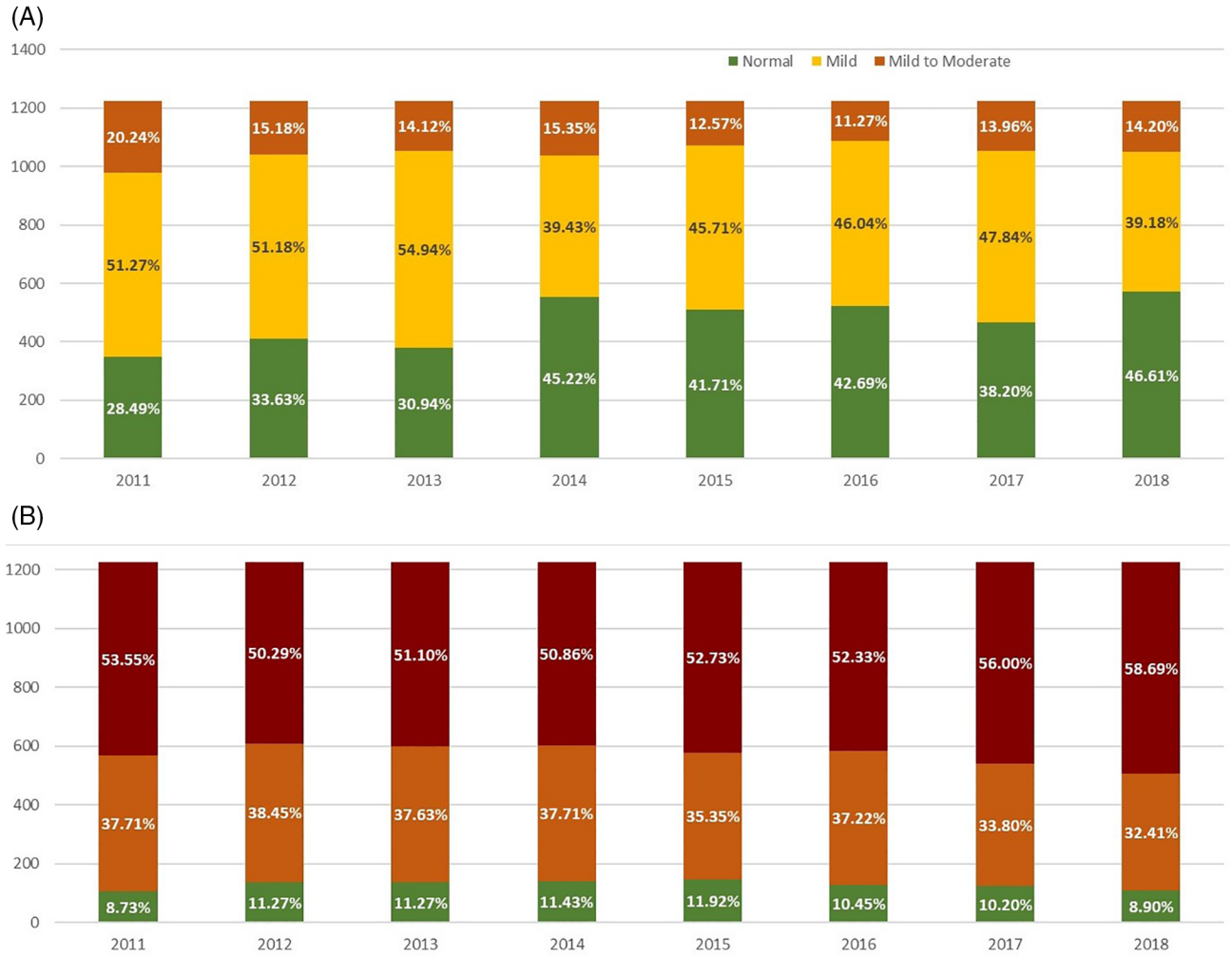

Figure 1 (a) Proportion of normal to mild-to-moderate executive function impairment across all waves among community-dwelling older adults. (b) Proportion of normal to severe memory impairment across all waves among community-dwelling older adults.

heart attack. Among participants with mild-to-moderate EF impairment, those with no history of heart attack were approximately 20% more likely to have frequent HAs compared with normal EF and no heart attack. The risk difference with a history of heart attack can increase to 85% (Table 3, Model 2).

Mild EF impairment and DM can increase the risk of frequent HAs by 29% compared with those with normal EF without DM. This risk among participants with DM and mild-to-moderate impairment can increase to 62% compared with those who had normal EF without DM (Table 3, Model 3).

Hospital admissions and memory

Participants with mild and severe memory impairment were approximately 11% more likely to have more frequent HAs compared with normal memory function. A history of heart attack, heart disease, hypertension, DM, lung diseases, stroke and cancer could increase the risk of repeated HAs by 68%, 65%, 18%, 21%, 25%, 39% and 42%, respectively (Table 4, Model 1).

Considering the regression model in Table 2, Model 2, the interactions between memory and hypertension, memory and DM, and memory and stroke were examined in three different models.

Among participants with normal memory, those who had hypertension were 86% more likely to have frequent HAs. Participants with mild memory impairment without hypertension were 96% more likely to have repeated HAs compared with those with normal memory and no hypertension. Mild memory impairment and hypertension could have similar results to mild impairment without hypertension (incidence rate ratio = 1.92 and 1.96, respectively). Regarding severe memory impairment with and without hypertension, they were more likely to have repeated HAs by 74% and 119%, respectively, compared with normal memory without hypertension (Table 4, Model 2).

Concerning the interactions between DM and memory impairment, those with normal memory and DM were 55% more likely to have frequent HAs compared with normal memory without DM. Mild memory with DM or without DM could increase the risk of frequent HAs by 40% and 55%, respectively. Among older people with severe memory impairment, having DM could increase the risk of frequent HAs by 64% compared with normal memory without DM. Severe memory impairment without DM could increase the risk of HA by 40% (Table 4, Model 3).

Table 1 Frequency of hospital admission, clock drawing test (CDT) score, word recall and control variables among community-dwelling older adults (2011–2018)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Global
Hospital admission, mean ± SD, range	0.21 ± 0.77, 0–17	0.27 ± 1.15, 0–30	0.27 ± 0.89, 0–15	0.27 ± 0.75, 0–11	0.22 ± 0.59, 0–7	0.26 ± 0.67, 0–7	0.30 ± 0.84, 0–11	0.30 ± 0.73, 0–8	0.26 ± 0.81, 0–30
Executive function,[†] *n* (%)									
Normal	349 (28.49)	412 (33.63)	379 (30.94)	554 (45.22)	511 (41.71)	523 (42.69)	468 (38.20)	571 (46.61)	3213 (37.47)
Mild	628 (51.27)	627 (51.18)	673 (54.94)	483 (39.43)	560 (45.71)	564 (46.04)	586 (47.84)	480 (39.18)	4118 (48.02)
Mild to moderate	248 (20.24)	186 (15.18)	173 (14.12)	188 (15.35)	154 (12.57)	138 (11.27)	171 (13.96)	174 (14.20)	1244 (14.51)
Memory,[‡] *n* (%)									
Normal	107 (8.73)	138 (11.27)	138 (11.27)	140 (11.43)	146 (11.92)	128 (10.45)	125 (10.20)	109 (8.90)	1031 (10.52)
Mild	462 (37.71)	471 (38.45)	461 (37.63)	462 (37.71)	433 (35.35)	456 (37.22)	414 (33.80)	397 (32.41)	3556 (36.29)
Severe	656 (53.55)	616 (50.29)	626 (51.10)	623 (50.86)	646 (52.73)	641 (52.33)	686 (56.00)	719 (58.69)	5213 (53.19)
Health problems, *n* (%)									
Heart attack	124 (10.13)	23 (1.88)	20 (1.63)	20 (1.63)	10 (0.82)	21 (1.72)	20 (1.64)	26 (2.12)	264 (2.70)
Heart disease	173 (14.13)	196 (16.00)	220 (17.97)	247 (20.18)	267 (21.80)	277 (22.61)	300 (24.49)	330 (26.94)	2010 (20.52)
HTN	773 (63.21)	801 (65.39)	825 (67.40)	854 (69.71)	867 (70.78)	878 (71.73)	900 (73.47)	925 (75.51)	6823 (69.65)
DM	242 (19.76)	262 (21.39)	279 (22.76)	292 (23.84)	299 (24.41)	312 (25.47)	322 (26.29)	329 (26.88)	2337 (23.85)
Lung disease	154 (12.57)	173 (14.12)	192 (15.67)	206 (16.82)	227 (18.53)	246 (20.10)	267 (21.81)	283 (23.14)	1748 (17.84)
Stroke	75 (6.13)	13 (1.066)	15 (1.22)	18 (1.47)	12 (0.98)	23 (1.88)	18 (1.47)	18 (1.48)	192 (1.96)
Cancer	312 (25.47)	65 (5.31)	65 (5.31)	74 (6.05)	76 (6.20)	74 (6.04)	83 (6.78)	81 (6.62)	830 (8.48)
Dementia	5 (0.41)	8 (0.65)	13 (1.06)	18 (1.47)	25 (2.04)	29 (2.37)	34 (2.78	50 (4.08)	182 (1.86)
History of falls	87 (7.10)	105 (8.57)	104 (8.50)	119 (9.71)	133 (10.86)	111 (9.06)	132 (10.78)	135 (11.02)	926 (9.45)
Walks 6 blocks	962 (79.05)	945 (77.84)	915 (75.31)	893 (73.86)	881 (73.23)	845 (69.89)	798 (66.50)	734 (61.58)	6973 (72.19)
Live not alone	866 (70.87)	869 (70.94)	834 (68.08)	833 (68.00)	823 (67.18)	819 (66.86)	813 (66.37)	792 (64.65)	6649 (67.87)
Community-dwelling	1200 (97.96)	1197 (97.71)	1194 (97.47)	1186 (96.82)	1184 (96.65)	1178 (96.16)	1169 (95.43)	1151 (93.96)	9459 (96.52)

[†]CDT.

[‡]Delayed word recall test.

DM, diabetes mellitus; HTN, hypertension.

Table 2 Regression models: health problems predict the level of EF and memory impairment among older adults (2011–2018)

Predictors	Model 1: EF (CDT)		Model 2: memory (DWRT)	
	OR (SE)	95% CI	OR (SE)	95% CI
Heart attack	1.50 (0.23) **	1.11–2.03	1.01 (0.17)	0.73–1.41
Heart disease	0.94 (0.09)	0.78–1.13	1.10 (0.13)	0.87–1.40
Hypertension	1.16 (0.10)	0.98–1.38	1.46 (0.16) **	1.18–1.81
DM	1.30 (0.13) *	1.07–1.58	1.33 (0.17) *	1.03–1.71
Lung disease	0.92 (0.09)	0.75–1.12	0.84 (0.11)	0.66–1.07
Stroke	1.34 (0.24)	0.94–1.91	1.65 (0.34) *	1.10–2.46
Cancer	1.04 (0.10)	0.86–1.24	0.97 (0.09)	0.80–1.17
Year	0.90 (0.01) ***	0.88–0.91	1.03 (0.01) **	1.01–1.05
Sigma2_u	1.73 (0.12)		3.85 (0.24)	3.41–4.34
	Log likelihood = −7404.29 Wald χ^2 (8)=158.54*** N = 8089		Log likelihood = −7321.80 Wald χ^2 (8)=41.22*** N = 9254	

Note: Longitudinal random-effects ordered logistic regression.
CDT, clock drawing test; CI, confidence interval; DM, diabetes mellitus; DWRT, delayed word recall test; EF, executive function; OR, odds ratio.
*$P < 0.05$,
**$P < 0.01$,
***$P < 0.001$.

Those participants with mild memory impairment and stroke were 66% more likely to have frequent HAs compared with normal memory and no stroke. Severe memory impairment without stroke could increase the risk of frequent HAs by 29% when severe impairment and stroke together could increase this risk to 83% compared with normal memory with no stroke (Table 4, Model 4).

Discussion

The results of this study showed that EF and memory impairment could increase the risk of frequent HAs by 9% and 11%, respectively. This risk is higher than the approximately 6% HA rate for AD and similar to 10.6% for vascular dementia.[25] Consistent with Natalwala *et al.* report, this study found that the effect of cognitive impairment on HA depends on certain comorbidities.[25] Certain health problems and mild and mild-to-moderate cognitive impairment can synergize each other's effect on the frequency of HAs. This finding is similar to that reported by Tuppin *et al.* where patients diagnosed with neurocognitive disorders were admitted to hospital due to neurological, psychiatric, respiratory and urology problems.[26] Nevertheless, the finding is slightly different from our previous cross-sectional study, which indicated that cognitive impairment could independently increase the risk of HAs among older adults.[9] One of the differences between the previous report and the current study, besides using the longitudinal data, is that the current study focused on people living in the community. Nevertheless, the interactions between cognitive impairment and health problems vary in EF and memory. Both heart attack and heart diseases can increase the risk of repeated HAs. However, concerning the interactions between EF and these two predictors, there was no significant relationship between heart disease and CDT score, which is consistent with other reports.[25,26] On the other hand, a heart attack was significantly correlated with CDT score when cases with a history of a heart attack were approximately 50% more likely to have mild or mild-to-moderate EF impairment. Controlling for these interactions revealed that the effect of a heart attack on HA varies across the levels of EF. Among normal EF, those with a history of a heart attack were more likely to be hospitalized. This rate dropped for cases with mild EF impairment then increased for mild-to-moderate and a positive history of a heart attack. To the best of our knowledge, this is a new finding as there are reports about heart failure and CF,[16] but not heart attack.

Our findings at the population level support the biological findings of the causal relationship between DM and cognitive impairment reported by Gaspar *et al.*[12] DM could increase the risk of mild and mild-to-moderate EF impairment by 30% when DM could increase the risk of frequent HAs among normal EF group. This rate could increase for mild and mild-to-moderate EF impairment. Feil *et al.* reported that older adults with cognitive impairment are more susceptible to poor diet and low physical activities, which can worsen DM side-effects.[27] Hence, DM and EF impairment can synergize their impacts on HAs. This is also a new finding that can shed light on some reasons for repeated HAs among older adults with DM. Considering that EF and memory can decline after HA, particularly among old-old and oldest populations,[7] also, mild cognitive impairment cases remain undiagnosed for a long time, it would be helpful if the case with DM screened for cognitive impairment at the time of admission and discharge. According to the Alzheimer's Disease Association, early diagnosis of cases with AD who were alive in 2018 could save the healthcare cost by $7 trillion.[28]

Regarding memory and chronic health problems, only hypertension, stroke and DM significantly predicted the variations of memory function. Hypertension can significantly increase the risk of HAs among older adults with normal memory. Besides, concurrent hypertension and mild and severe memory impairment can increase this risk compared with those with normal memory without hypertension. According to Cho *et al.*, known cases of hypertension and cognitive impairment experience side effects of hypertension due to the lack of medication adherence,[29] which can be a mediating factor between cognitive impairment and uncontrolled hypertension, rendering more HAs. DM itself can increase the risk of frequent HAs. However, the combination of memory impairment and DM increases this risk significantly. People with DM and mild memory impairment are more susceptible to frequent HAs compared with normal memory without DM. This risk slightly increases among people with severe memory impairment and DM. Mild memory impairment and stroke

Table 3 Longitudinal zero-inflated Poisson regression model: level of EF predicting hospital admission among older adults (2011–2018)

Predictors		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		IRR (SE)	95% CI	IRR (SE)	95% CI	IRR (SE)	95% CI
EF (CDT)		1.09 (0.04) *	1.02–1.18	—	—	—	—
Heart attack		1.46 (0.14) ***	1.22–1.76	—	—	1.46 (0.14) ***	1.22–1.75
Normal EF and HA		—	—	1.71 (0.32) **	1.18–2.28	—	—
Mild EF		—	—	1.09 (0.07)	0.96–1.22	—	—
Mild EF and HA		—	—	1.44 (0.19) *	1.11–1.88	—	—
MM EF		—	—	1.20 (0.10) *	1.03–1.41	—	—
MM EF and HA		—	—	1.85 (0.30) ***	1.35–2.55	—	—
Heart disease		1.62 (0.09) ***	1.44–1.82	1.62 (0.1) ***	1.44–1.81	1.62 (0.10) ***	1.44–1.81
Hypertension		1.26 (0.08) **	1.09–1.42	1.24 (0.09) **	1.09–1.41	1.25 (0.08) **	1.10–1.42
DM		1.22 (0.07) ***	1.11–1.40	1.25 (0.07) **	1.11–1.40	—	—
Normal EF and DM		—	—	—	—	1.14 (0.12)	0.93–1.40
Mild EF		—	—	—	—	1.05 (0.07)	0.91–1.20
Mild EF and DM		—	—	—	—	1.29 (0.12) **	1.08–1.53
MM EF		—	—	—	—	1.10 (0.10)	0.92–1.32
MM EF and DM		—	—	—	—	1.62 (0.18) ***	1.30–2.02
Lung disease		1.20 (0.07) ***	1.11–1.41	1.25 (0.08) ***	1.11–1.41	1.25 (0.08) ***	1.11–1.41
Stroke		1.53 (0.16) **	1.16–1.78	1.44 (0.16) **	1.16–1.78	1.44 (0.16) **	1.16–1.78
Cancer		1.44 (0.11) ***	1.26–1.70	1.48 (0.12) ***	1.27–1.72	1.46 (0.11) ***	1.26–1.70
Falling		1.33 (0.10) ***	1.15–1.54	1.32 (0.10) ***	1.15–1.53	1.33 (0.10) ***	1.15–1.54
Walks 6 blocks		0.66 (0.05) ***	0.57–0.78	0.66 (0.05) ***	0.57–0.77	0.67 (0.05) ***	0.57–0.78
Age		1.02 (0.01) ***	1.01–1.03	1.02 (0.01) ***	1.01–1.03	1.02 (0.01) ***	1.01–1.03
Hispanic		1.30 (0.18) *	1.01–1.76	1.34 (0.19) *	1.01–1.77	1.31 (0.19)	0.99–1.73
African American		1.15 (0.11)	0.92–1.35	1.11 (0.11)	0.92–1.35	1.09 (0.11)	0.90–1.32
Other ethnicities		0.43 (0.16) *	0.17–0.82	0.37 (0.15) *	0.17–0.81	0.37 (0.15) *	0.17–0.81
Women		0.90 (0.05)	0.81–1.01	0.90 (0.05) *	0.81–1.01	0.90 (0.05)	0.81–1.00
Lives with partner		1.02 (0.06)	0.90–1.13	1.01 (0.06)	0.90–1.13	1.01 (0.06)	0.90–1.12
Year		0.98 (0.01) *	0.95–0.99	0.97 (0.01) *	0.95–0.99	0.97 (0.01) *	0.95–0.99
Inflated	Walks 6 blocks	0.60 (0.12) ***	0.38–0.84	0.60 (0.12) ***	0.37–0.83	0.61 (0.12) ***	0.38–0.85
	Hispanic	−0.10 (0.24)	−0.54 –0.41	−0.06 (0.24)	−0.53 –0.41	−0.09 (0.24)	−0.56 –0.39
	African American	0.18 (0.15)	−0.16 –0.42	0.13 (0.15)	−0.16 –0.42	0.11 (0.15)	−0.19 –0.40
	Other ethnicities	−2.36 (2.61)	−17.29 –10.50	−3.63 (8.89)	−21.05 –13.79	−3.67 (9.33)	−21.98 –14.63
		Log likelihood = −4931.039 LR χ^2 (18)=335.00*** *N* = 8117		Log likelihood = −4803.79 LR χ^2 (20)=329.41*** *N* = 7963		Log likelihood = −4803.08 LR χ^2 (20)=330.82*** *N* = 7963	

EF, executive function; HA, hospital admission; IRR, incidence rate ratio; MM, mild-to-moderate.

*$P < 0.05$,

**$P < 0.01$,

***$P < 0.001$.

can significantly increase this risk, and the occurrence of stroke in people with severe memory impairment can raise this risk.

The ability to walk six blocks can predict the frequency of HAs, as those who were able to walk this distance were less likely to have frequent HAs by 34% and more likely to have no HAs.

As HAs are significant events, older adults are more likely to remember them accurately.[21] Nonetheless, the recall bias of the respondents could confound the reliability of self-reported HAs, chronic health problems and the ability to walk. The questionnaire asked "hospital stays" within the last year. However, there is the possibility that the respondents considered admission to other care units, such as rehabilitation centers, as a hospital stay. Considering the type of admission, we suggest controlling for this variable in future studies.

Social support and engagement to care providers is a significant factor in preserving the physical and mental health of community-dwelling older adults.[30] Thus, more research about cognitive impairment, social support and outcome of chronic health issues can help understand the social determinants of HAs among community-dwelling older adults.

The results of this study suggest that concurrent physical health problems (i.e., heart attack and DM) with EF impairment can increase this risk tremendously. This pattern is different for memory as people concurrently suffering from memory impairment and hypertension, stroke and DM are at higher risk of frequent HAs, which can conversely increase the risk of memory and EF impairment and create a vicious cycle. Screening for memory impairment among older patients with hypertension, DM and stroke can be recommended at the time of admission and discharge. The same suggestion can be made for EF screening among older patients with heart attack and DM.

Disclosure statement

The authors disclose no conflicts of interest.

Table 4 Longitudinal zero-inflated Poisson regression model: memory predicting hospital admission among older adults (2011–2018)

Predictors		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
		IRR (SE)	95% CI	IRR (SE)	95% CI	IRR (SE)	95% CI	IRR (SE)	95% CI
Memory (DWRT)		1.11 (0.04) **	1.03–1.20	—	—	—	—	—	—
Heart attack		1.68 (0.14) ***	1.42–1.98	1.69 (0.14) ***	1.43–1.99	1.67 (0.14) ***	1.41–1.97	1.67 (0.14) ***	1.42–1.98
Heart disease		1.65 (0.09) ***	1.48–1.83	1.64 (0.09) ***	1.45–1.83	1.65 (0.09) ***	1.48–1.83	1.65 (0.09) ***	1.48–1.83
HTN		1.18 (0.07) **	1.05–1.33	—	—	1.18 (0.07) **	1.05–1.33	1.18 (0.07) **	1.05–1.33
Normal DWRT and HTN		—	—	1.86 (0.39) **	1.23–2.81	—	—	—	—
Mild DWRT		—	—	1.96 (0.40) **	1.32–2.93	—	—	—	—
Mild DWRT and HTN		—	—	1.92 (0.38) **	1.31–2.82	—	—	—	—
Severe DWRT		—	—	1.74 (0.35)*	1.17–2.59	—	—	—	—
Severe DWRT and HTN		—	—	2.19 (0.42)***	1.50–3.20	—	—	—	—
DM		1.21(0.07)**	1.08–1.34	1.21 (0.07)**	1.08–1.34	—	—	1.21 (0.07) **	1.08–1.35
Normal DWRT and DM		—	—	—	—	1.55 (0.30)*	1.06–2.27	—	—
Mild DWRT		—	—	—	—	1.29 (0.15)*	1.04–1.61	—	—
Mild DWRT and DM		—	—	—	—	1.55 (0.20) **	1.20–1.99	—	
Severe DWRT		—	—	—	—	1.40 (0.15) **	1.13–1.73	—	—
Severe DWRT and DM		—	—	—	—	1.64 (0.20) ***	1.30–2.08	—	—
Lung disease		1.25 (0.07) ***	1.12–1.40	1.25(0.07) ***	1.12–1.40	1.25 (0.07) ***	1.12–1.40	1.25 (0.07) ***	1.12–1.40
Stroke		1.39 (0.14) **	1.14–1.71	1.40 (0.14) **	1.14–1.71	1.39 (0.14) **	1.14–1.71	—	—
Normal DWRT and stroke		—	—	—	—	—	—	1.31 (0.58)	0.55–3.10
Mild DWRT		—	—	—	—	—	—	1.21 (0.12)	0.99–1.461
Mild DWRT and stroke		—	—	—	—	—	—	1.66 (0.40) *	1.04–2.68
Severe DWRT		—	—	—	—	—	—	1.29 (0.13) **	1.07–1.56
Severe DWRT and stroke		—	—	—	—	—	—	1.83 (0.27) ***	1.37–2.44
Cancer		1.42 (0.11) ***	1.22–1.64	1.41 (0.11) ***	1.22–1.63	1.42 (0.11) ***	1.23–1.64	1.42 (0.11) ***	1.22–1.64
Falling		1.23 (0.09) **	1.08–1.41	1.23 (0.09) **	1.07–1.41	1.23 (0.09) **	1.07–1.41	1.23 (0.09) **	1.07–1.41
Walks 6 blocks		0.71 (0.05) ***	0.61–0.82	0.71 (0.05) ***	0.62–0.82	0.71 (0.05) ***	0.61–0.81	0.71 (0.05) ***	0.61–0.82
Age		1.02 (0.01) ***	1.01–1.03	1.02 (0.01) ***	1.01–1.03	1.02 (0.01) ***	1.01–1.03	1.02 (0.01) ***	1.01–1.03
Hispanic		1.21 (0.17)	0.93–1.59	1.22 (0.17)	0.93–1.60	1.23 (0.17)	0.94–1.62	1.22 (0.17)	0.93–1.60
African American		1.06 (0.10)	0.89–1.28	1.07 (0.01)	0.89–1.28	1.07 (0.10)	0.90–1.29	1.07 (0.10)	0.89–1.28
Other ethnicities		0.42 (0.14) *	0.21–0.81	0.42 (0.14) *	0.21–0.82	0.42 (0.14) *	0.21–0.82	0.42 (0.14) *	0.21–0.82
Women		0.91 (0.05)	0.82–1.01	0.91 (0.05)	0.82–1.01	0.91 (0.05)	0.82–1.01	0.91 (0.05)	0.82–1.01
Lives with partner		0.97 (0.05)	— 0.87–1.08	0.97 (0.05)	0.87–1.07	0.97 (0.05)	0.87–1.08	0.97 (0.05)	0.87–1.07
Year		0.97 (0.01) **	0.95–0.99	0.97 (0.01) **	0.95–0.99	0.97 (0.01) **	0.95–0.99	0.97 (0.01) **	0.95–0.99
Inflated	Walks 6 blocks	0.67 (0.11) ***	0.45–0.90	0.68 (0.11) ***	0.45–0.90	0.66 (0.11) ***	0.44–0.89	0.67 (0.11) ***	0.45–0.90
	Hispanic	−0.17 (0.24)	−0.63 −3.00	−0.17 (0.24)	−0.63 −0.30	−0.16 (0.24)	−0.62 −0.33	−0.17 (0.24)	−0.63 −0.30
	African American	0.06 (0.15)	−0.23 −0.35	0.06 (0.15)	−0.23 −0.35	0.07 (0.15)	−0.22 −0.35	0.06 (0.15)	−0.23 −0.35
	Other ethnicities	−1.97 (1.74)	−5.37 −1.44	−1.96 (1.74)	−5.38 −1.42	−1.97 (1.76)	−5.42 −1.47	−1.95 (1.723)	−5.33 −1.42
		Log likelihood = −5531.26 LR χ^2 (17)=347.85*** *N* = 9113		Log likelihood = −5526.08 LR χ^2 (20)=358.22*** *N* = 9113		Log likelihood = −5529.89 LR χ^2 (20)=350.60*** *N* = 9113		Log likelihood = −5530.78 LR χ^2 (20)=348.81*** *N* = 9113	

DM, diabetes mellitus; DWRT, delayed word recall test; EF, executive function; HTN, hypertension; IRR, incidence rate ratios.

*$P < 0.05$,

**$P < 0.01$,

***$P < 0.001$.

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How to cite this article: Amini R, Kawser B. Impact of the interaction between mild and mild-to-moderate cognitive impairment with chronic health problems on hospital admission among community-dwelling older adults. Geriatr. Gerontol. Int. 2020;20:1213–1220. https://doi.org/10.1111/ggi.14070