

## WONCA Europe Conference Warsaw 2011

### Oral presentation

#### **How can we reduce avoidable hospitalizations of multimorbid elderly patients? Chances and limitations of primary care based care management**

Tobias Freund, Cornelia Mahler, Joachim Szecsenyi, Frank Peters-Klimm

**Aim(s) and background:** Hospitalizations due to “ambulatory care sensitive conditions” (ACSCs) are stated to be “avoidable” through optimal (primary) care. Multimorbid patients are likely to be hospitalized for a potentially avoidable cause. Literature suggests that care management can reduce these hospitalizations. However, general practitioners (GPs) experience a variety of causes for hospitalizations in this patient population. It is unclear how care management can address them. This study aims to explore causes of potentially avoidable hospitalizations of multimorbid elderly patients and how primary care-based care management may reduce the number of hospitalizations.

**Material & method:** Based on insurance claims data of 536 multimorbid patients from 10 general practices in Baden-Württemberg (Germany), we determined all hospitalizations due to ACSCs in 2008. In a second step, every hospitalization was discussed with the treating GP. Therefore, we performed semi-structured interviews with 12 GPs in the participating practices. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Content analysis was performed with the software atlas.ti.

**Results:** In total, 151 potentially avoidable hospitalizations of 109 patients were discussed. Of these, GPs rated about one third as actually avoidable. Main causes for these hospitalizations were patient-related (e.g. non-adherence), physician-related (e.g. lack of communication between care providers, delayed awareness of symptom deterioration) and organizational (e.g. lack of ambulatory services). GPs perceived monitoring of patients’ adherence and symptom deterioration as well as improved communication between different care providers as key measures for care management.

**Conclusions:** Primary care based care management for multimorbid patients could address significant causes of potentially avoidable hospitalizations. However, a high proportion of these hospitalizations appear to be un-avoidable.