

萬病相連 藥藥腎重 — 日服百粒！醫病不可承受之「重」

All roads lead to Rome and all drugs to kidney — Daily taking hundred pills! the  
unbearable polypharmacy

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Polypharmacy is the concurrent use of multiple medications. Although there is no standard definition, polypharmacy is often defined as the routine use of five or more medications. This includes over-the-counter, prescription and/or traditional and complementary medicines used by a patient. This often happens when a person has many chronic diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart failure, osteoporosis, and/or symptoms such as pain or insomnia, requiring long-term treatment with medications.

The goal should be to reduce inappropriate polypharmacy and to ensure appropriate polypharmacy. It is a global problem, its prevalence ranges from 38.1 to 91.2%. Mismanaged polypharmacy contributed to 4% of the world's total avoidable costs due to suboptimal medicine use. A total of US\$ 18 billion, 0.3% of the global total health expenditure could be avoided by appropriate polypharmacy management. What are the risks of polypharmacy? It can lead to mistakes in storing or taking them correctly. For instance, the same type of medication might be prescribed twice. A medication might interfere by other agents, which is known as a drug-drug interaction. A medication used to treat a disease might have a negative effect on another disease, which is known as drug-disease interaction.

What should patients do if they are taking many medications? Always keep an accurate and updated list of medications you are taking. Periodically discuss medication regimens with your doctor. Getting family and caregivers involved. Avoid suddenly stopping prescribed medications. There are key steps for ensuring medication safety, including (a) appropriate prescribing and risk assessment, (b) medication review, (c) dispensing, preparation and administration, (d) communication and patient engagement and (d) medication reconciliation at care transitions