

Polypharmacy

Why in News?

A cross-sectional study conducted among 600 older adults across 6 Indian cities has found that the prevalence of polypharmacy and unsafe self-medication is high in this population.

- **Polypharmacy** - Refers to the intake of 5 or more medications per day.
- **Prevalence** - The *highest prevalence of polypharmacy was found in Guwahati (57%)*, while Madhya Pradesh (Ujjain) had the lowest prevalence (11.7%).
- **Impact** - The prevalence of polypharmacy was 33.7% with significant associations to multiple comorbidities (2 or More Disease) causing hospitalization.
- **Survey Conducted by** - Researchers from various institutes such as Department of Global Public Health, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden and the Indian Council of Medical Research.
- **Older Persons' Prescriptions and Screening Tool to Alert to Right Treatment (STOPP-START)** - An updated screening tool that was used in the survey to:
 - Identify potentially inappropriate medications (PIM) and potential prescribing omissions (PPO) respectively.
- The study found the proportion of prescriptions with PIM and PPO were 28.8% and 20.3% respectively.
- The *highest prevalence of PIM use is 46.2%* and it was attributed to medications prescribed without evidence-based clinical indications and those prescribed beyond the recommended duration.
- **Key findings of the survey** - 25.2% of the individuals used at least one fixed-drug combination (solid oral formulations).
- The most common combinations were antihypertensive and antidiabetic fixed-drug combinations.
- The *prevalence of self-medication was 19.7%*, associated with factors, such as staying alone, multiple comorbidities and recent hospitalizations.
- The most common medicines that were self-medicated were nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (59%).
- It was followed by paracetamol (42.4%) and antibiotics for upper respiratory tract infection and diarrhoea (33.9%).
- A lack of awareness and unsafe practices were found among self-medicating individuals.
- Among those who self-medicated, 65.3% lacked knowledge of self-medication, 50% did not comprehend the risks and 40.7% reported unsafe self-medication practices.
- **Prevention** - To promote safe medication use in older adults.
- Lack of interventions in creating awareness and establishing services for medication reconciliation, review and feedback.

Reference

[The Hindu | Polypharmacy](#)

