MULTIPLE CHRONIC CONDITIONS: THE PATTERNS VS THE NUMBERS

Multiple Chronic Conditions (MCCs) – diagnoses of more than one chronic condition at one time – place a significant burden on the health care system. Much of the focus to date has been on an overall count of MCCs. New research from University of Wisconsin Professor John Mullahy draws attention to the importance of examining how chronic conditions cluster. An understanding of these patterns could serve as the foundation for the development of innovative approaches to evaluate changing patterns in population health. Researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and other stakeholders would then be better equipped to address MCCs and improve public health and health equity. Using Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, Dr. Mullahy developed the heat maps below to highlight the nuances in how MCCs cluster for certain groups.

RACE/ETHNICITY: WHITE NON-HISPANIC (vs. OTHER GROUPS)

EDUCATION LEVEL: HIGH SCHOOL GRADS (vs. NON-HIGH SCHOOL GRADS)

# of chronic conditions

there are wide variances to where CC combos fall in each heatmap

for a given # of CCs, associations vary depending on the specific combo of conditions.

for example, among 2 CC combos, being white is negatively associated with CVD and diabetes but positively associated with cancer and depression

high school graduates generally have fewer diagnoses of CCs, but some patterns of CCs are positively correlated with graduating from high school.

BRFSS CONDITIONS CODES:

diabetes   cancer   stroke   chronic lower respiratory disorder   arthritis   cardiovascular disease   kidney disease   depression

COLOR CODE:

most negative association   most positive association

*effects are unadjusted