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Improving Health Outcomes through Nurse-Led Monitoring Models: Evidence from a Longitudinal Evaluation of Multimorbidity Care

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ABSTRACT: Multimorbidity presents major challenges for delivering coordinated, patient-centered chronic care. This study developed and evaluated a structured, outcome-based, nurse-led framework to monitor and improve health outcomes among adults with multiple chronic conditions. Using a longitudinal observational design, patients were assessed at baseline, weeks 8–12, and quarterly using validated instruments: EQ-5D (health-related quality of life), PAM (patient activation), PHQ-9/GAD-7 (mental health), MTBQ (treatment burden), and PACIC (care coordination experience). Standardized outcome terminologies, such as NOC, were incorporated to enhance reproducibility. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including repeated-measures and correlation analyses. Results showed significant improvements in health-related quality of life, mental health, and patient activation. PAM scores were strongly and inversely associated with emergency department visits, and positively associated with PACIC scores. PHQ-9 and MTBQ scores decreased, reflecting reduced psychological distress and treatment burden. Standardized terminologies enabled effective mapping of nursing interventions to patient outcomes. These findings support the scientific and practical value of outcome-based models in nurse-led care for complex populations, enhancing the visibility, consistency, and effectiveness of nursing practice in chronic disease management. The framework offers a scalable, patient-centered approach and lays groundwork for future research and policy development in outcome-based chronic care.

Keywords: Nurse-Led Care, Outcome-Based Evaluation, Multimorbidity, Patient Activation, Chronic Disease Management, Treatment Burden, Standardized Outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of multimorbidity, defined as the coexistence of multiple chronic conditions in a single individual, has become a global health concern with critical implications for healthcare systems and workforce planning. Among adults, especially those over 65 years old, multimorbidity

affects up to 65% of the population and is frequently associated with hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health conditions (Peel et al., 2021; Sili et al., 2023). The increasing number of patients managing multiple chronic illnesses imposes considerable demands on health services, often resulting in fragmented, inefficient care delivery and poor clinical outcomes.

Patients with multimorbidity frequently encounter significant challenges in navigating their treatment regimens, coordinating among various providers, and coping with the physical and psychological consequences of chronic illness. These issues contribute to elevated rates of hospitalizations, higher healthcare expenditures, diminished quality of life, and greater risk of mortality (Veldhuizen et al., 2024). The healthcare burden is particularly acute in low- and middle-income countries, where access to comprehensive and continuous care is limited, further widening disparities in health outcomes (Peel et al., 2021; Veldhuizen et al., 2022).

Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs), including Nurse Practitioners (NPs) and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs), are increasingly recognized for their contributions in addressing the complex needs of multimorbid patients. Their specialized education and clinical training position them to deliver holistic, patient-centered care that extends beyond symptom management to include education, psychosocial support, and care coordination (Østensen et al., 2021; Sili et al., 2023). APNs are capable of implementing evidence-based interventions that promote medication adherence, lifestyle modifications, and preventive care practices, thereby improving patient engagement and long-term outcomes (Veldhuizen et al., 2024).

Multiple studies underscore the effectiveness of nurse-led models in managing chronic illness, demonstrating reduced hospital readmissions, improved symptom control, and enhanced patient satisfaction (Sili et al., 2023). Furthermore, the incorporation of APNs into interdisciplinary teams can alleviate pressure on physicians and contribute to more efficient, equitable care delivery (Alatawi et al., 2020). Despite these benefits, the ability to evaluate and communicate the impact of nursing care remains limited by inconsistent use of standardized outcome metrics and the lack of structured monitoring systems.

Several validated instruments have been established to evaluate patient outcomes in chronic care settings. The Patient Activation Measure (PAM) assesses individuals' knowledge, skills, and confidence in managing their health, serving as a proxy for self-management capacity. Health-related quality of life (HRQoL) tools, such as EQ-5D and SF-36, capture the broader impacts of chronic disease on daily functioning and well-being (Peel et al., 2021; Veldhuizen et al., 2022). Other critical metrics include the Patient Assessment of Chronic Illness Care (PACIC), which evaluates the alignment of care with the Chronic Care Model, and the Multimorbidity Treatment Burden Questionnaire (MTBQ), which quantifies the perceived complexity of managing multiple health conditions. These instruments provide a reliable means of tracking care outcomes, yet they are underutilized in routine nursing practice (Alshammari et al., 2023).

Nursing-sensitive outcomes, such as rates of pressure injuries, medication-related adverse events, and patient safety incidents, are increasingly recognized as valuable indicators of care quality. When combined with patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs), these metrics offer a comprehensive view of nursing impact on patient trajectories. The integration of standardized

classifications, such as the Nursing Outcomes Classification (NOC), further enhances the ability to systematically track and compare care outcomes across settings and populations (Peel et al., 2021; Veldhuizen et al., 2022).

Despite the availability of these tools, many current care models fail to consistently capture patient-centered outcomes. Fragmented service delivery, lack of interprofessional communication, and insufficient attention to psychosocial determinants of health limit the effectiveness of existing approaches (Peel et al., 2021; Veldhuizen et al., 2024). Acute-care-focused paradigms often overlook the longitudinal needs of patients with multimorbidity, undermining efforts to promote continuity, engagement, and holistic well-being (Veldhuizen et al., 2024).

Further complicating matters is the absence of standardized protocols guiding the frequency and method of outcome assessment. Variations in institutional policies and regional health governance contribute to uneven adoption of outcome tracking practices, hindering efforts to evaluate nursing contributions rigorously (Alshammari et al., 2023). Additionally, the lack of integration between outcome measurement tools and electronic health record systems reduces efficiency and limits the availability of actionable data for continuous quality improvement.

Incorporating structured outcome monitoring into routine nursing care has the potential to transform chronic disease management. By establishing clear evaluation protocols, healthcare teams can ensure that interventions are evidence-informed and adapted to individual needs. Structured monitoring allows clinicians to identify patient deterioration early, evaluate the effectiveness of care strategies, and revise care plans responsively (Peel et al., 2021; Østensen et al., 2021). This approach not only enhances clinical outcomes but also fosters a culture of accountability, quality improvement, and professional development.

Healthcare organizations that implement structured monitoring systems consistently report improved performance across key indicators such as patient satisfaction, treatment adherence, and readmission rates (Sili et al., 2023; Østensen et al., 2021). These systems also facilitate data collection for audit and research purposes, enabling evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation (Peel et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, several barriers hinder the widespread adoption of structured outcome measurement in nursing practice. These include staff resistance to change, inadequate training, and limited institutional support. Organizational inertia and resource constraints further impede efforts to institutionalize standardized outcome frameworks (Alatawi et al., 2020). However, facilitators such as leadership commitment, continuous education, and a supportive organizational culture have been shown to mitigate these challenges and promote successful implementation (Peel et al., 2021; Sili et al., 2023).

The objective of this study is to develop and evaluate a quantitative framework for structured outcome monitoring in nurse-led chronic care. By integrating validated instruments with clearly defined timelines and standardized terminologies, this study aims to enhance the visibility, consistency, and impact of nursing contributions to multimorbidity care. The framework proposed herein offers a scalable model that aligns with best practices in chronic disease management and supports improved care quality and patient outcomes.

METHOD

Study Design

This study employed a longitudinal observational design to examine the effectiveness of nurse-led chronic care in improving outcomes for patients with multimorbidity. Longitudinal designs are well-suited for evaluating care models over time, particularly in chronic illness contexts where long-term effects and outcome trajectories are key considerations. While randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are considered the gold standard in clinical research, this study's design enables real-world evaluation while accommodating practical and ethical considerations common in healthcare delivery settings (Markle-Reid et al., 2023).

Although not applied here, RCTs have successfully assessed nurse-led transitional care models, comparing them with standard care across outcomes like hospital readmission and HRQoL (Markle-Reid et al., 2023). Prospective cohort studies, which follow participants over time, have also proven useful for tracking patient engagement, symptom progression, and system utilization under nurse-led care (Williams et al., 2022). In future research, mixed-methods designs combining clinical outcome measures with patient experience data could provide more holistic insights into the impact of nursing interventions (Gordon et al., 2020).

Population and Sample

Participants were adults aged 18 and older with two or more diagnosed chronic conditions (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression). All participants were enrolled in nurse-led chronic care programs coordinated by APNs/NPs/CNSs in community-based or outpatient settings. Convenience sampling was used, with participants recruited during routine care appointments.

Data Collection Instruments

The outcome measures were selected based on validity, reliability, and applicability to chronic multimorbidity:

- EQ-5D / SF-12 / SF-36: Standardized tools for assessing HRQoL across five key domains (mobility, self-care, usual activities, pain/discomfort, and anxiety/depression).
- PHQ-9 / GAD-7: Validated tools for screening and tracking mental health status (depression and anxiety).
- MTBQ (Multimorbidity Treatment Burden Questionnaire): Assesses treatment workload, including medication adherence, appointments, and care coordination.
- PACIC (Patient Assessment of Chronic Illness Care): Evaluates patient perception of how well care aligns with the Chronic Care Model.

- PAM (Patient Activation Measure): Measures patients' knowledge, skills, and confidence in managing their health.

These instruments are widely used in research and clinical practice and are well-suited for longitudinal outcome evaluation among patients with complex care needs (Rocque et al., 2022; Schuttner et al., 2019).

Operational Definitions and Variable Measurement

Variables were operationalized as follows:

- HRQoL_total (continuous): Total score derived from EQ-5D/SF-12/SF-36.
- MentalHealth_score (continuous): Summative score from PHQ-9 or GAD-7.
- TreatmentBurden_MTBQ (ordinal/continuous): 10-item treatment burden score.
- UnplannedCare_30d (binary): 0 = no ED/readmission; 1 = ED/readmission within 30 days.
- Activation_PAM (ordinal/continuous): Patient activation score across four levels.
- CareCoord_PACIC (continuous): Score reflecting patient experience of chronic care.
- ADE_count / Appointment_burden / Polypharmacy_n: Discrete counts derived from EHR.

Data Collection Schedule

The study followed a structured timeline. Assessments were conducted at:

- Baseline: All outcomes
- Weeks 2–4: Targeted reassessment (PHQ-9/GAD-7 if initial score elevated)
- Weeks 8–12: Full reassessment for all outcomes
- Quarterly/Semester: Ongoing follow-up, especially for care continuity and burden

Teams responsible for each domain included APNs/NPs/CNSs, quality personnel, and medical records staff. These structured intervals were informed by clinical milestones and care planning cycles.

Implementation Strategies for Longitudinal Tracking

Outcome tracking was embedded within clinical routines via electronic health record (EHR) systems. Reminders and scheduling tools supported follow-up assessments, while care coordinators ensured adherence and documentation (Kersting & Weltermann, 2016). Team-based huddles and telehealth check-ins helped align care goals and monitor progress across time.

Telehealth visits were utilized to conduct interim assessments when in-person visits were not feasible (Pariser et al., 2019). This flexibility proved critical in maintaining data completeness and adapting to patient circumstances. APNs emphasized continuity of care and personalized monitoring strategies to support adherence and engagement (Davis et al., 2020).

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis included:

- Descriptive statistics: To summarize baseline characteristics and instrument scores
- Repeated Measures ANOVA: To assess outcome trajectories over time
- Pearson/Spearman correlations: To explore associations among PAM, HRQoL, PACIC, and treatment burden

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, with $p < 0.05$ considered statistically significant. Missing data were handled using pairwise deletion where appropriate.

Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical approval from an institutional review board. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout data collection and analysis. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without affecting their care.

This chapter provides the methodological foundation for evaluating the outcomes of a nurse-led chronic care framework using validated tools, a structured timeline, and a multidisciplinary care model.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Participant Profile

Table 1. Demographic Factors and Engagement

Factor	Observation
Age	Older adults show higher compliance and engagement
Gender	Women more proactive; men less engaged due to health-seeking norms
Socioeconomic	Lower SES linked to limited access and lower health literacy

Table 2. Polypharmacy and Outcomes

Issue	Observation
Polypharmacy Risk	Associated with non-adherence and adverse events

Issue	Observation
Nurse Interventions	Education and medication management reduce polypharmacy-related risk

Demographic attributes such as age and gender have considerable influence on patient engagement with nurse-led interventions. Older adults are more responsive due to their heightened awareness of chronic health issues, while women typically demonstrate greater health-seeking behavior. However, socioeconomic disparities also create significant barriers to care access and adherence.

Polypharmacy, prevalent among multimorbid patients, complicates treatment and elevates the risk of adverse events. Nurse-led education and medication reconciliation help mitigate these risks, enhancing safety and effectiveness of care.

Outcome Changes

Tabel 3. Quality of Life and Mental Health

Outcome	Direction of Change	Significance
HRQoL (EQ-5D)	Improved in 6 months	Increased physical and mental functioning
PHQ-9 / GAD-7	Decreased scores	Reduced depression and anxiety

Tabel 4. Treatment Burden and Activation

Metric	Direction of Change
MTBQ	Decreased
PAM	Increased

Nurse-led interventions positively influence both subjective and objective outcomes. Patients experience tangible improvements in quality of life as measured by EQ-5D, alongside marked reductions in depressive symptoms and anxiety levels. These findings underscore the psychological and physical benefits of structured nursing support.

Moreover, patients report decreased treatment burden, reflecting streamlined care processes. Simultaneously, PAM scores rise, signaling improved confidence and knowledge in managing personal health, reinforcing the value of empowerment-focused nursing strategies.

Outcome Relationships

Table 5. Inter-Outcome Correlations

Relationship	Result
PAM vs. PACIC	Positive correlation
PAM vs. ED Visits	Inverse relationship
Mental Health ↔ Care Coordination ↔ HRQoL	Mental health mediates coordination benefits

Relationship	Result
MTBQ vs. Outcomes	High burden = poor outcomes

A notable finding is the strong correlation between patient activation and perceived care quality. Patients with higher PAM scores are more likely to express satisfaction, while also showing lower reliance on emergency services. This implies that patient empowerment directly influences care efficiency and cost reduction.

Furthermore, the interconnectedness of mental health, coordinated care, and quality of life reinforces the holistic nature of effective chronic care. High treatment burden undermines multiple outcomes, making it a critical target for nurse-led intervention.

Use of Standardized Terminology (NOC)

Tabel 6. Relevance and Application

NOC Use Case	Benefit
Evaluation Framework	Improves comparability across settings
Self/Family Management	Aligns NOC with individualized care outcomes
Chronic Disease Studies	Enhances clarity in measuring impact
Research Reproducibility	Supports standardized reporting

The integration of NOC into evaluation frameworks allows researchers and clinicians to measure outcomes systematically, using shared language. This standardization enhances research quality and clinical accountability. It also facilitates cross-study comparisons, which are essential for cumulative evidence building.

Furthermore, the alignment of NOC with patient self-management and caregiver roles provides a robust foundation for personalized care planning. It ensures that outcome measurement reflects both professional interventions and patient contributions, promoting holistic chronic care management.

The implementation of outcome-based nursing frameworks has emerged as a transformative approach in the management of chronic illness and multimorbidity. These frameworks, such as the Nursing Outcomes Classification (NOC), allow for the evaluation of care processes and patient progress through standardized, quantifiable indicators. Their application promotes consistency in assessments, facilitates interprofessional communication, and enhances the credibility of nursing interventions in healthcare systems increasingly driven by data and accountability (Whitehead et al., 2021, 2023).

In policy and practice, outcome-based frameworks elevate nursing by positioning measurable outcomes as central to care planning and evaluation. They empower nurses to contribute to care delivery through targeted goals, thereby clarifying their role within interdisciplinary teams. This not only improves the visibility of nursing contributions but also aligns with policy objectives focused on quality, safety, and equity in health services (Dobarrio-Sanz et al., 2024; Gonçalves et al., 2022). Importantly, outcome-based models embody the principles of patient-centered care by

emphasizing health improvements that matter most to patients, such as functional ability, symptom management, and psychosocial wellbeing.

When compared to traditional models of chronic disease management often fragmented and disease-specific nurse-led outcome-based frameworks offer a more holistic and adaptable structure. Previous frameworks have tended to focus narrowly on acute care or single disease silos, whereas nurse-led approaches address the interrelated needs of patients with multiple chronic conditions. This model recognizes the dynamic and cumulative nature of multimorbidity, allowing for integrated and flexible interventions that respond to evolving patient needs (Frank et al., 2019; Yang & Peng, 2021).

The enhanced adaptability of this nurse-led model is particularly relevant in modern healthcare contexts where personalization and real-time responsiveness are prioritized. Unlike rigid standard care models, nurse-led approaches allow for the continuous refinement of care based on real-time monitoring of patient outcomes. Furthermore, the use of patient-reported outcomes measures (PROMs) ensures that the patient's voice is not only heard but becomes central to the clinical decision-making process (Lundstrøm et al., 2024; Porter et al., 2021).

Despite these advantages, the integration of nurse-led outcome tracking into electronic health records (EHR) remains fraught with challenges. One major technical barrier is the lack of interoperability between different EHR systems, which hinders the seamless flow of information across care settings. This fragmentation compromises the continuity and comprehensiveness of patient data (Bozkurt et al., 2023; Lemos et al., 2020). Equally critical is the need for extensive training to ensure nurses are equipped to document, interpret, and act on outcome data effectively. Inadequate training can lead to underutilization of EHR capabilities, limiting the potential for real-time clinical feedback and iterative care adjustments (Chae et al., 2020; Setyaningrum et al., 2019).

Organizational culture also plays a decisive role in the success of EHR-integrated outcome tracking. Institutions that do not prioritize outcome documentation or lack leadership support may resist such changes, stifling innovation. Therefore, cultivating a culture that values outcomes, promotes digital fluency, and supports interprofessional collaboration is crucial for successful implementation (Bozkurt et al., 2023; Younas et al., 2023).

To strengthen the impact of these care models, several research directions warrant further exploration. Longitudinal studies are essential to investigate the sustained effects of nurse-led models on health outcomes, cost efficiency, and patient satisfaction. These studies would provide robust evidence for scaling and policy integration (Lundstrøm et al., 2024; Whitehead et al., 2023). There is also a critical need to refine and validate outcome measures tailored to the multimorbid population, particularly those that capture psychosocial and activation-related dimensions of chronic illness management (Vela et al., 2021; Yang & Peng, 2021).

Additionally, research must address the contextual variables affecting implementation across different care environments. Urban versus rural disparities, resource availability, and cultural factors all influence the adaptability and success of nurse-led models. Tailored strategies, informed by contextual analysis, will enhance the equity and effectiveness of these interventions (Fehling & Dassen, 2017; Frank et al., 2019).

Finally, technological innovation must be leveraged to support sustainable outcome tracking. Mobile health platforms, telehealth, and cloud-based data systems hold potential for extending the reach and impact of nursing interventions. Future research should explore how these technologies can be integrated with nurse-led models to promote continuous care, patient engagement, and real-time evaluation (Seibert et al., 2021; Yang & Peng, 2021).

In summary, outcome-based nursing models represent a critical advancement in chronic disease management. They offer a framework that is evidence-based, patient-centered, and adaptable to the complex needs of multimorbid populations. The continued refinement and dissemination of these models through practice, policy, and research will be essential for addressing the challenges of contemporary healthcare delivery.

CONCLUSION

The increasing prevalence of multimorbidity has highlighted the need for innovative, structured, and patient-centered models of chronic care. This study has demonstrated the effectiveness of outcome-based nursing frameworks, particularly those led by Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs), in enhancing the management of complex patient needs. By integrating standardized assessment tools such as the EQ-5D, PAM, PHQ-9, PACIC, and MTBQ within a time-bound evaluation framework, nurse-led models have shown substantial improvements in patient activation, treatment burden, quality of life, and mental health outcomes.

Key findings from this study reinforce the value of nurse-led interventions in achieving measurable and meaningful health outcomes. Improvements in PAM scores were strongly associated with reduced emergency department visits and enhanced patient satisfaction, while reductions in PHQ-9 and MTBQ scores highlighted the positive impact on mental health and treatment complexity. Furthermore, the application of standardized terminologies like the Nursing Outcomes Classification (NOC) provided a scientific structure that supports reproducibility, clarity, and integration across healthcare systems.

These outcomes emphasize the importance of structured, data-driven evaluation in nursing practice. The model proposed in this study bridges clinical practice and empirical evidence, enabling nurses to deliver care that is responsive, accountable, and aligned with patients' evolving needs. It contributes to a growing body of evidence that supports the role of nurses not only as care providers but also as leaders in healthcare transformation.

Scientifically, the study contributes a replicable framework for chronic care management, grounded in patient-reported outcomes and reinforced by standard clinical assessments. It offers a model that other healthcare organizations can adapt to evaluate, refine, and scale nurse-led programs.

Moving forward, continued research, especially longitudinal and interventional studies, will be critical to validate these findings across settings and populations. Future efforts should also focus on integrating this framework with electronic health records, expanding its reach through digital health technologies, and addressing systemic barriers to implementation. By doing so, nursing

practice can evolve to meet the complexities of multimorbidity care while ensuring high-quality, patient-centered outcomes.

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