

Using Routinely Collected Electronic Healthcare Record Data to Investigate Fibrotic Multimorbidity in England [Letter]

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Dear editor

The article titled “Using Routinely Collected Electronic Healthcare Record Data to Investigate Fibrotic Multimorbidity in England” is a significant contribution to the field of epidemiology, particularly in the study of chronic diseases through electronic healthcare records (EHR).¹ The research demonstrates the utility of EHR data in identifying and analyzing the prevalence and impact of fibrotic diseases that often occur together, termed fibrotic multimorbidity. This approach offers a valuable perspective on the burden of such conditions on public health systems by leveraging existing data, making it cost-effective and expansive in scope.^{2,3} However, the study’s methodology invites some criticism, particularly concerning data quality and the potential biases inherent in routinely collected EHR data. Medical records, while rich in information, can suffer from incompleteness, inconsistency, or biases introduced by healthcare providers’ coding practices, potentially leading to classification errors or inadequate reporting of specific conditions. Furthermore, the study’s reliance on pre-existing codes and the lack of standardization across different healthcare settings could have impacted the accuracy of the multimorbidity estimates.⁴ To address these issues, future research should prioritize the standardization of EHR data collection and coding practices across different healthcare systems to improve data consistency and reliability. Additionally, implementing advanced data cleaning and validation techniques could mitigate the effects of incomplete or biased records, ensuring more accurate and representative results.⁵ Integrating patient-reported outcomes and other qualitative data sources might also enrich the understanding of fibrotic multimorbidity, providing a more holistic view of these conditions. Overall, while the article successfully highlights the potential of EHR data in epidemiological research, these methodological enhancements are crucial for refining future studies in this area.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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