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A Holistic Approach to Physical and Mental Health: Associations Between Chronic Disease and Psychiatric Conditions

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OBJECTIVE

- To investigate the link between chronic medical conditions and psychiatric disorders

BACKGROUND

- Limited research has been done studying the relationship between chronic medical conditions and psychiatric disorders in patients comorbid with both types of conditions.
- Prior research studies have demonstrated that patients with chronic medical conditions are more likely to develop psychiatric disorders compared to healthy individuals without any medical conditions.
- As individuals develop chronic medical conditions, they may encounter additional obstacles in their lives, which may contribute to the development of psychiatric disorders.

METHODS

- The sample included patients recruited from Rowan Family Medicine outpatient offices across four southern New Jersey counties (N=200).
- Inclusion criteria included all adults 18-89 years of age.
- Patients were given an anonymous, ten-question survey and a paper consent from June 3, 2019 to July 12, 2019.
- The survey collected information about subjects' medical conditions, age at diagnosis of first chronic medical condition, age at diagnosis of first psychiatric disorder, rank of control of chronic medical conditions and rank of control of psychiatric disorders if applicable.
- Multivariate analysis was used to examine the relationships between patients' rank of control of chronic medical conditions, rank of control of psychiatric disorders, total number of chronic medical conditions and total number of psychiatric disorders.
- Collected data was analyzed using SPSS software version 24.0.

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RESULTS

- Among the 200 study participants (134 female and 65 males), 113 individuals reported having at least 1 chronic medical condition and 74 individuals reported having at least 1 psychiatric disorder.
- Of all the participants, 63 individuals (40 females and 23 males) reported a comorbidity of both at least one chronic medical condition and at least one psychiatric disorder.
- Among the participants comorbid with both chronic medical conditions and psychiatric disorders, patients' ranking of control of their chronic medical conditions positively correlated with their ranking of control of their psychiatric disorders ($p=0.009$). (Figure 1)
- Also, patients' ranking of their control of their chronic medical conditions negatively correlated with the total number of their psychiatric disorders ($p=0.002$). (Figure 2)

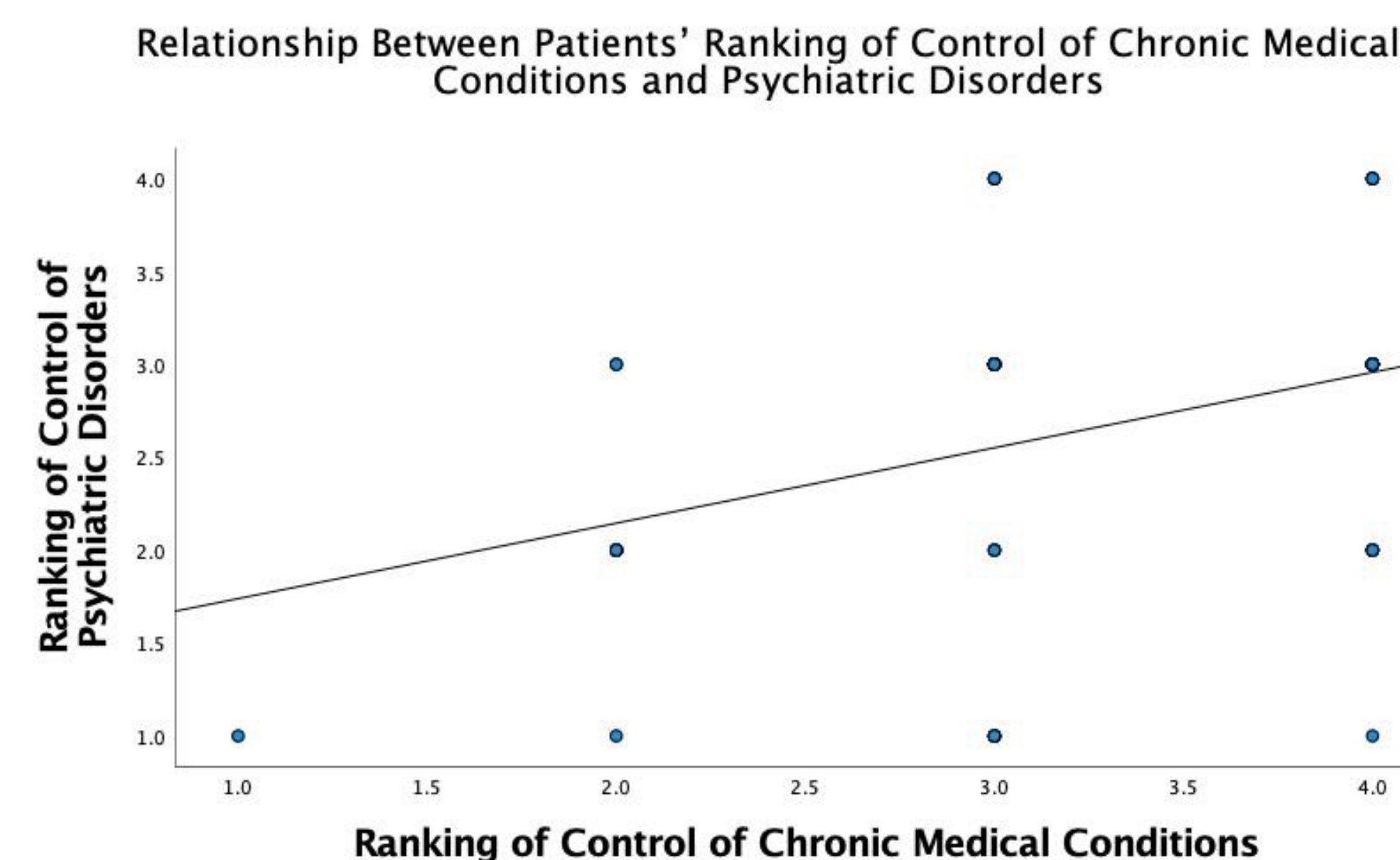


Figure 1: Positive correlation between patients' ranking of the control of their chronic medical conditions and psychiatric disorders. Patients who ranked control of their chronic medical conditions highly also ranked control of their psychiatric disorders highly.

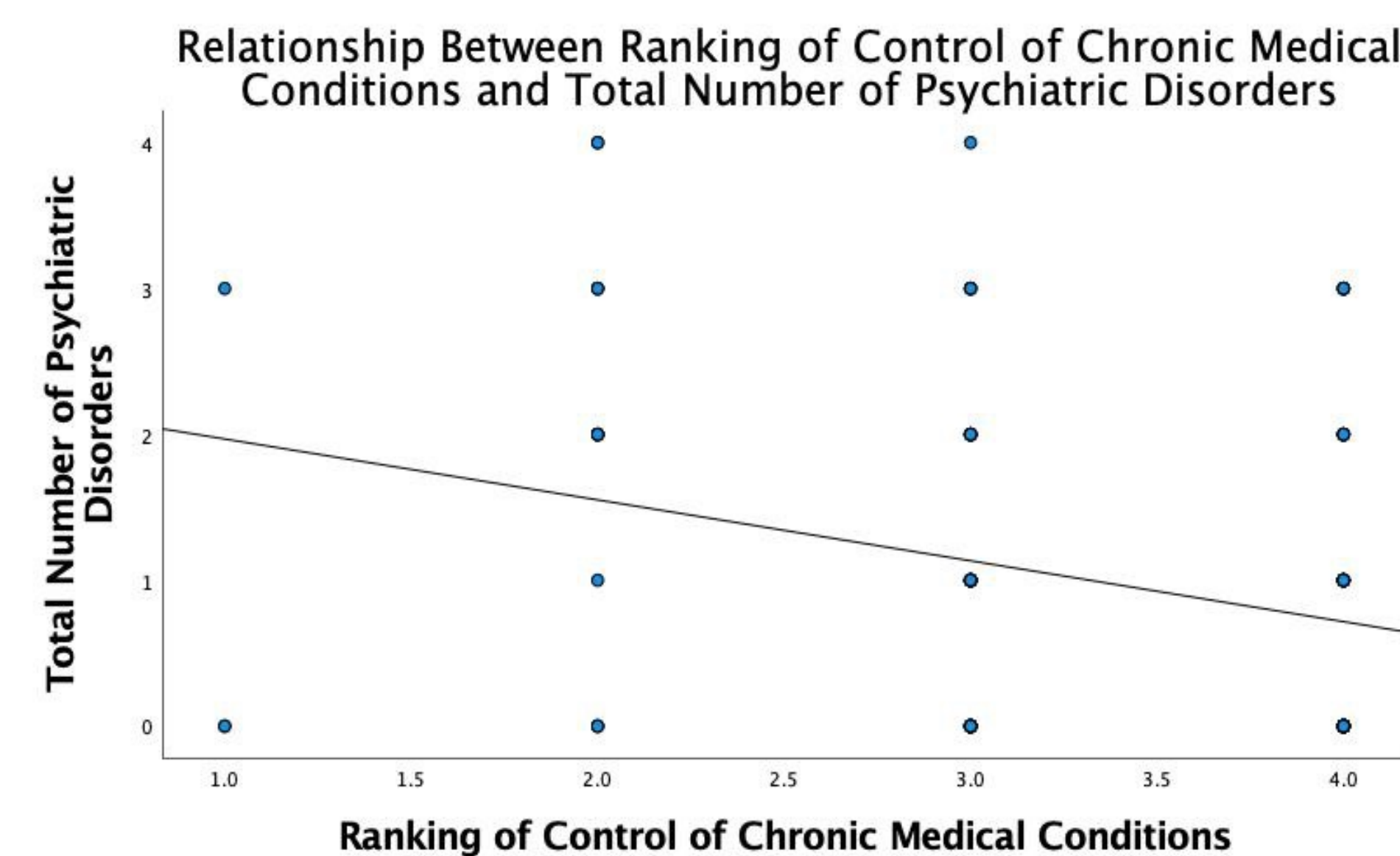


Figure 2: Negative Correlation between patients' ranking of control of their chronic medical conditions and total number of psychiatric disorders. As the number of psychiatric conditions rises, perceived control of physical health conditions decreases.

DISCUSSION

- This study suggests that patients' perceived control of their overall health is dependent on their physical and mental health states.
- This study further contributes to the current literature about the importance of taking a holistic approach in medical management of patients.
- Additionally, the study helps raise awareness of the complexity of having both chronic medical conditions and psychiatric disorders and the reciprocal interplay of respective conditions.
- Clinicians should be encouraged to recognize this relationship between one's physical and mental health.
- By recognizing the importance of this interplay, clinicians can intervene early and assist patients in taking control of their overall health and helping them achieve the most optimal health states.

CONCLUSION

- This cross-sectional survey study provides evidence to suggest that individuals' perceived physical health and mental health impact each other.
- In order to best take care of patients, clinicians should be recommended to utilize a holistic approach to primary and specialty care.
- By integrating simultaneous care of both physical and mental health conditions, clinicians can assist patients in improving their overall subjective health states and quality of life.

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