

Complex Aging in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Lessons from the Brain Health-IDD ECHO Program

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Background

- Adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) undergo an accelerated and more complex aging trajectory compared to the general population (McCarron et al., 2017).
- They are at increased risk for dementia and often present with multiple co-occurring conditions (Patel et al., 2025).
- To ensure appropriate support and care for this group, the Brain Health-IDD ECHO virtual education program was developed and delivered to health and social service providers across Canada.

Aims: (1) describe patient clinical characteristics; (2) identify service providers' concerns and the underlying factors contributing to these concerns.

Methods

265 health and social service providers completed the Brain Health-IDD ECHO program. All patient cases presented during the case-based learning component of the program (N = 19) and recommendations provided by the clinical team (N = 366) were examined.

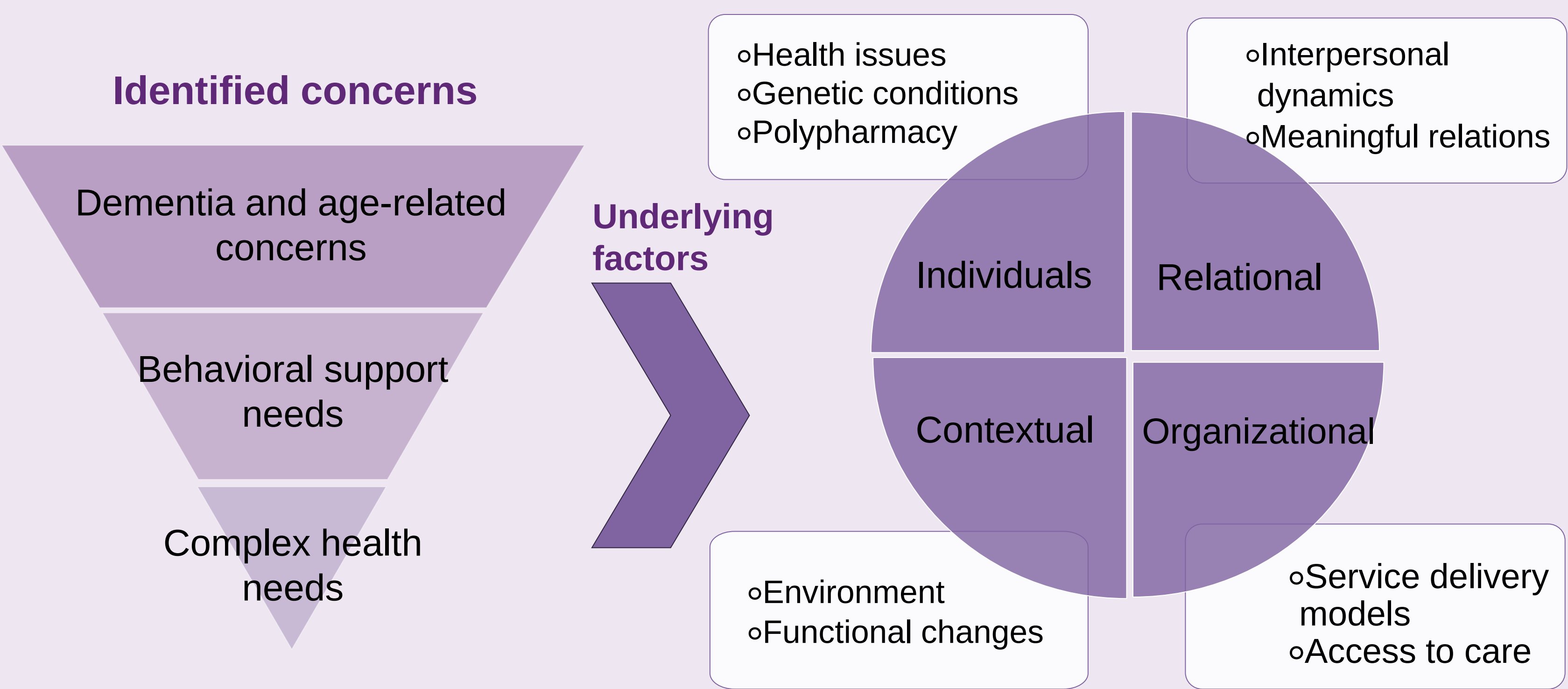
Health profile: Descriptive analyses were conducted and the anticholinergic burden (ACB) was calculated.

Concerns and underlying factors: Qualitative analyses were performed using reflexive thematic analysis and inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

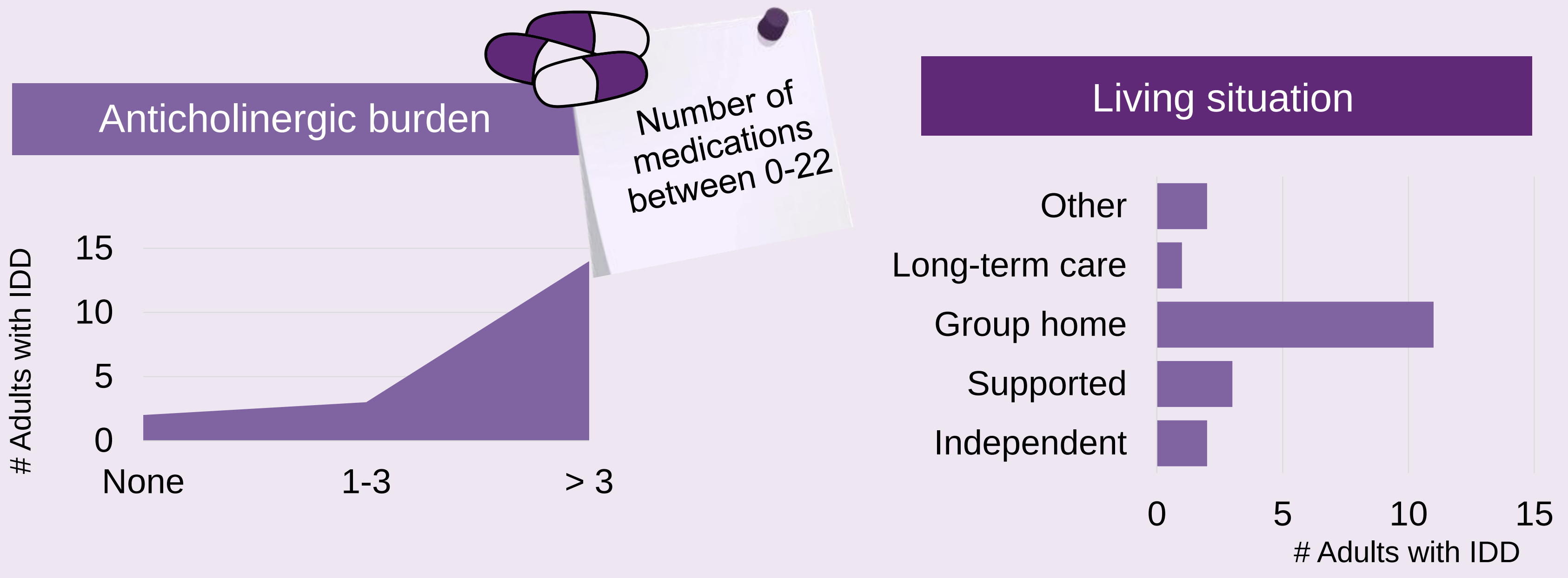
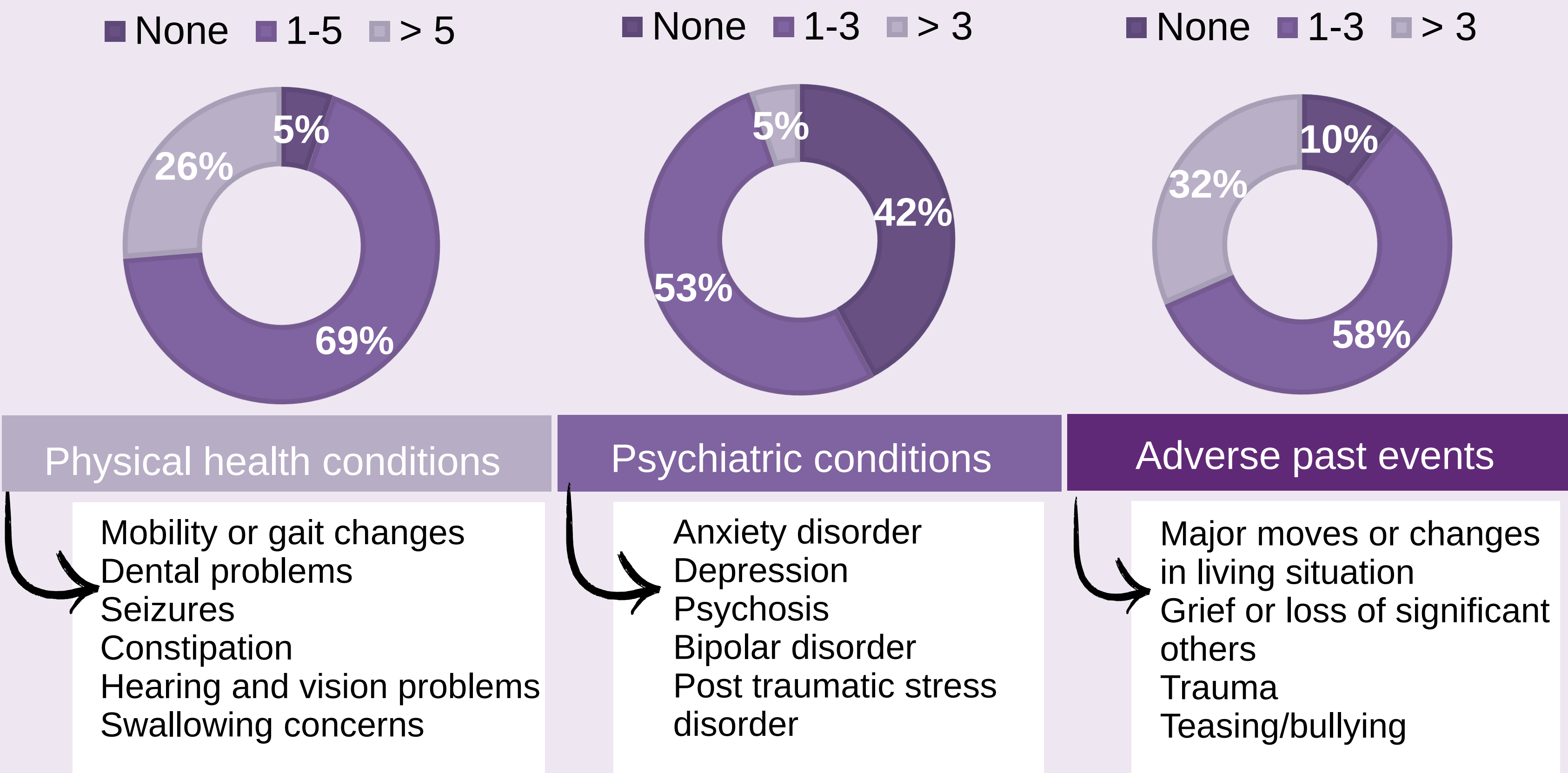
Patient Characteristics

Age: 40-80 years
Female/Male = 1:1; Unspecified *n* = 1
IDD severity: Mild *n* = 4; Moderate *n* = 6; Severe *n* = 3; Profound *n* = 1; Unspecified *n* = 5

Identified Concerns and Underlying Contributive Factors



Health Profile of Adults with IDD



Discussion

- Identified concerns were aligned with the increased risk of dementia highlighted in previous studies (McCarron et al., 2017; Patel et al., 2025). Our findings underscore the importance of **providing supportive environments** for adults with IDD as they tend to express their needs through behaviors.
- When caring for aging adults with IDD, health and social service providers need to **simultaneously address multiple challenges** such as health issues, functional changes, psychiatric conditions, adverse past events polypharmacy, and systemic organizational barriers that further exacerbate the challenges faced by this population.
- To address these factors, study findings underscore the importance of:
1) using a **holistic approach to care**,
2) ensuring accessible geriatric services **before age 65**, 3) **deprescribing** when possible, 4) providing **trauma-informed care**, 5) supporting **long-term care planning**, and 6) supporting **meaningful relationships**.

References



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