Prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines and complementary and alternative medicines use in baby boomers and older South Australians and their association with health outcomes (as assessed by health services use and quality of life)

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# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Definitions of Ageing

### 1.2 Defining baby boomers

### 1.3 Defining older people

### 1.4 Defining health services use

### 1.5 Defining medicines use

### 1.6 Defining health risk factors

### 1.7 Defining chronic conditions

### 1.8 Defining polypharmacy

### 1.9 Defining prevalence

### 1.10 Defining association

### 1.11 Defining association between health services use and medicines use

### 1.12 Defining association between chronic conditions and medicines use

### 1.13 Defining medicine use in baby boomers or older people with CVD

### 1.14 Defining weightings

### 1.15 Defining response rate

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Definitions of Ageing

### 2.2 The Prevalence of the Use of Medicines

#### 2.2.1 Prescription medicines

#### 2.2.2 Over-the-counter (OTC) medicines

#### 2.2.3 Complementary and Alternative Medicines (CAM)

#### 2.2.4 Polypharmacy

#### 2.2.5 Concomitant use of medicines

#### 2.2.6 Summary of prevalence of the use of medicines

### 2.3 Types of Medicines Used

#### 2.3.1 Main types of medicines used

### 2.4 Predictors of Medicines Use

#### 2.4.1 Association between sociodemographic characteristics and medicines use

#### 2.4.2 Association between health risk factors and medicines use

#### 2.4.3 Association between chronic conditions and medicines use

#### 2.4.4 Medicine use in baby boomers or older people with CVD

### 2.5 Association between Medicines Use and Health Outcomes

#### 2.5.1 Association between health services use and medicines use

#### 2.5.2 Association between QoL and medicines use

### 2.6 Aims of the Study

### 2.7 Hypotheses

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

### 3.2 Ethics

### 3.3 South Australian Health Omnibus Survey (HOS)

#### 3.3.1 Sampling procedure

#### 3.3.2 Questionnaires

#### 3.3.3 Pilot testing

#### 3.3.4 Data collection

#### 3.3.5 Response rate

#### 3.3.6 Weighting

#### 3.3.7 Validation

### 3.4 The North West Adelaide Health Study (NWABS)

#### 3.4.1 Sampling procedure

#### 3.4.2 Questionnaires

#### 3.4.3 Outcome measures

#### 3.4.4 Pilot testing

#### 3.4.5 Data collection

#### 3.4.6 Response Rate

#### 3.4.7 Weighting

### 3.5 Analytical Methods

#### 3.5.1 Univariable Analysis

#### 3.5.2 Multivariable analysis

#### 3.5.3 Collinearity diagnostics

#### 3.5.4 Logistic regression

#### 3.5.5 Linear regression
CHAPTER 4: PREVALENCE OF THE USE OF MEDICINES AMONG SA BABY BOOMERS AND OLDER PEOPLE

4.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 107
4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOS & NWAHS PARTICIPANTS .................................................................................................................. 107
  4.2.1 Demographic characteristics of HOS 1 ..................................................................... 107
  4.2.2 Demographic characteristics of HOS 2 ..................................................................... 108
  4.2.3 Comparison of the demographic characteristics, HOS 1 & 2 .............................. 108
  4.2.4 Demographic characteristics of NWAHS ................................................................. 108
4.3 PREVALENCE OF THE USE OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES, OTC MEDICINES AND CAM OR COMBINATIONS OF THESE (HOS 1 & 2) .................................................................................................................. 110
  4.3.1 Prevalence of the use of prescription medicines, OTC medicines and CAM or a combination of these, HOS 1 ................................................................. 110
  4.3.2 Prevalence of the use of prescription medicines, OTC medicines and CAM or a combination of these, HOS 2 ................................................................. 113
  4.3.3 Overall summary of the comparison of prevalence of the use of medicines, HOS 1 & 2 ...... 119
4.4 PREVALENCE OF THE USE OF MEDICINES (NWAHS) .................................................. 121
  4.4.1 Prevalence of prescription medicine use ................................................................. 121
  4.4.2 Prevalence of the OTC medicines use .................................................................... 121
  4.4.3 Prevalence of CAM use ......................................................................................... 122
  4.4.4 Prevalence of the use of combinations of prescription medicines and CAM .......... 122
  4.4.5 Prevalence of the use of combinations of prescription medicines, OTC and CAM .... 122
  4.4.6 Prevalence of the use of polypharmacy and major polypharmacy .......................... 124
  4.4.7 Prevalence of combinations of medicines, NWAHS ............................................... 126
  4.4.8 Concomitant use of prescription medicine with OTC medicines and/or CAM, NWAHS ...... 127
  4.4.9 Overall summary of the comparison of prevalence of the use of prescription medicines, OTC medicines, CAM or combination of these, NWAHS ................. 130
4.5 MAIN GROUPS OF THE ANATOMICAL THERAPEUTIC CHEMICAL (ATC) CLASSIFICATION FOR EACH AGE GROUP (HOS 2) ................................................................................................. 130
4.6 CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................................... 133

CHAPTER 5: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND MEDICINES USE FOR SA BABY BOOMERS AND OLDER PEOPLE ............................................................................... 134

5.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 135
5.2 MEDICINES USE BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, HOS 1 & 2 ................................................................. 135
  5.2.1 Medicines use by demographic characteristics, HOS 1 ........................................ 135
  5.2.2 Medicines use by demographic characteristics, HOS 2 ........................................ 138
5.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USE OF MEDICINES AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ................................................................................................. 141
  5.3.1 Univariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics associated with medicines use, HOS 1 ................................................................. 142
  5.3.2 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics associated with medicines use, HOS 1 ................................................................. 143
  5.3.3 Univariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics associated with medicines use, HOS 2 ................................................................. 147
  5.3.4 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics associated with medicines use, HOS 2 ................................................................. 149
5.4 CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................................... 154

CHAPTER 6: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND HEALTH RISK FACTORS, AND MEDICINES USE FOR SA BABY BOOMERS AND OLDER PEOPLE ............................................................................... 156

6.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 157
6.2 PREVALENCE OF CHRONIC CONDITIONS FOR EACH AGE GROUP ................................................................. 157
  6.2.1 The prevalence of the use of medicines for each chronic condition .......................... 158
6.3 Prevalence of health risk factors for each age group ................................................................. 164
6.4 Biomedical measurements ........................................................................................................... 166
6.5 Univariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics, chronic conditions, health risk factors and the use of medicines ........................................................................ 167
   6.5.1 Univariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics associated with medicines .................................................................................................................. 167
   6.5.2 Univariable logistic regression analysis of chronic conditions associated with medicines use ............................................................................................................................. 167
   6.5.3 Univariable logistic regression analysis of health risk factors with medicines use .......... 170
   6.5.4 Univariable logistic regression analysis of biomedical measurements with medicines use 171
6.6 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic, chronic conditions, health risk factors and biomedical measurements variables associated with medicines use .................. 173
   6.6.1 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic and health risk factors and biomedical measurement variables associated with prescription medicines use .......... 173
   6.6.2 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic and health risk factors and biomedical measurement variables associated with OTC medicines use .................. 176
   6.6.3 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic and health risk factors and biomedical measurement variables associated with CAM use ........................................ 178
   6.6.4 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic and health risk factors and biomedical measurement variables associated with polypharmacy .................... 178
6.7 Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 181

CHAPTER 7: THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MEDICINES USE AND HEALTH OUTCOMES AS MEASURED BY HEALTH SERVICES USE FOR SA BABY BOOMERS AND OLDER PEOPLE ................................................................. 183

7.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 184
7.2 The prevalence of using health service or GP visit in last month ............................................. 185
   7.2.1 Prevalence of using health service or GP visit in last month, HOS 1 ............................... 185
   7.2.2 Prevalence of using health service or GP visit in last month, HOS 2 ............................... 185
   7.2.3 Proportion of respondents using any health service in the last month or at least one GP visit by age group, HOS 1 & 2 ...................................................................................... 187
7.3 The prevalence of using health service use or GP visit in last month by demographic characteristics ......................................................................................................................... 187
7.4 Relationship between demographic characteristics and health service or GP visit .............. 188
   7.4.1 Univariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics and medicines use associated with health services use or GP visits, HOS 1 ........................................ 188
   7.4.2 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics and medicines use associated with health services use or GP visits, HOS 1 ........................................ 188
   7.4.3 Univariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics and medicines use associated with health services use or GP visits, HOS 2 ........................................... 191
   7.4.4 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics and medicines use associated with health services use or GP visits, HOS 2 ........................................... 192
   7.4.5 Summary of the predictors for health services use and GP visits, HOS 1 & 2 .................. 196
7.5 The prevalence of using health service or GP visit in the past 12 months, NWAHS .............. 198
   7.5.1 Prevalence of using health service or GP visit in the past 12 months ............................. 198
   7.5.2 The prevalence of using health service or GP visit in the last 12 months by demographic characteristics, NWAHS ......................................................................................... 199
   7.5.3 The prevalence of using health services or GP visits in the last 12 months by chronic conditions, NWAHS ............................................................................................................ 199
   7.5.4 The prevalence of using health services or GP visits in the last 12 months by health risk factors ............................................................................................................................. 199
   7.5.5 The prevalence of using health services or GP visits in the last 12 months by biomedical measurements ................................................................................................................... 199
   7.5.6 The prevalence of using health services or GP visits in the last 12 months by medicines use ....................................................................................................................................... 200
7.6 Relationship between medicines use and health services use or GP visits, NWAHS .............. 201
7.6.1 Univariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics, chronic conditions, health risk factors, biomedical measurements and medicines use associated with health services use ................................................................................................................. 201
7.6.2 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics, health risk factors, biomedical measurement and medicines use variables associated with health services use .................................................................................. 202
7.7 Summary of the association between medicines use including prescription medicines, OTC medicines, CAM and polypharmacy and health services use and GP visits .................................................................................................................... 206
7.8 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 206

CHAPTER 8: THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MEDICINES USE AND HEALTH OUTCOMES AS MEASURED BY QUALITY OF LIFE FOR SA BABY BOOMERS AND OLDER PEOPLE ......................................................... 207
8.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 208
8.2 Quality of life (PCS and MCS) for baby boomers and older people .............................. 208
  8.2.1 PCS and MCS for each age group, HOS 1 .......................................................... 208
  8.2.2 PCS and MCS for each age group, HOS 2 .......................................................... 209
  8.2.3 Summary of PCS and MCS for each age group, HOS 1 and HOS 2 ................. 211
8.3 Association of medicines use and QoL (PCS and MCS) ............................................ 211
  8.3.1 Association of prescription medicines use with QoL (PCS and MCS), HOS 1 ...... 211
  8.3.2 Association of CAM use with QoL (PCS and MCS), HOS 1 ............................... 211
  8.3.3 Association of prescription medicine use and QoL (PCS and MCS), HOS 2 ...... 213
  8.3.4 Association of OTC medicines use and QoL (PCS and MCS), HOS 2 .............. 213
  8.3.5 Association of CAM use and QoL (PCS and MCS), HOS 2 .............................. 213
  8.3.6 Association of combination of medicines use and QoL (PCS and MCS), HOS 2 .. 213
  8.3.7 Summary ........................................................................................................ 215
8.4 Association between prescription use (by ATC code first level) and QoL (PCS and MCS), HOS 2 ......................................................... 218
8.5 Summary ............................................................................................................. 221
8.6 Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 221

CHAPTER 9: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDICINES USE AND QUALITY OF LIFE WITH SA BABY BOOMERS AND OLDER PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC FOCUS ON PEOPLE WITH CVD .................................................... 222
9.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 223
9.2 Prevalence of CVD ............................................................................................... 223
9.3 Demographic characteristics of those with CVD, NWAHS ...................................... 223
9.4 Prevalence of medicines use for people with CVD, NWAHS .................................. 225
9.5 Prevalence of chronic conditions for those with CVD, NWAHS ................................. 226
9.6 Health risk factors for people with CVD, NWAHS ................................................ 227
9.7 Biomedical measurements for those with CVD, NWAHS ........................................ 228
9.8 Predictors for the use of prescription medicine, OTC, CAM or polypharmacy for those with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................. 229
  9.8.1 Univariable logistic regression analysis of demographic characteristics, chronic conditions and health risk factors associated with medicines use among people with CVD, NWAHS ................................. 229
  9.8.2 Multivariable logistic regression analysis of demographic and health risk factors and biomedical measurement variables associated with medicines use, NWAHS .................................................................................................................. 242
9.9 Association between use of medicines and QoL among people with CVD. .................. 244
9.10 Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 246

CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION ......................................................................................... 247
10.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 248
10.2 Medicines use ....................................................................................................... 248
  10.2.1 Prescription medicine ...................................................................................... 248
  10.2.2 OTC medicines ................................................................................................ 249
  10.2.3 CAM .................................................................................................................. 249
  10.2.4 Combination of medicines use ........................................................................ 252
  10.2.5 Polypharmacy .................................................................................................. 253
10.3 Demographics, risk factors and chronic condition predictors associated with use of medicines .............................................................................................................................. 255
  10.3.1 Gender .............................................................................................................. 255
  10.3.2 Work status ....................................................................................................... 256
Table 2.1: Literature related to prevalence of the use of prescription medicines in baby boomers or older people ................................................................. 11
Table 2.2: Literature related to prevalence of the OTC medicines use in baby boomers and older people ................................................................. 14
Table 2.3: Five domains of CAM categorized by NICM ......................................................... 16
Table 2.4: Literature related to prevalence of the use of CAM in baby boomers and older people .... 18
Table 2.5: Literature related to prevalence of the use of polypharmacy in baby boomers and older people ................................................................................. 22
Table 2.6: Literature regarding concomitant use of medicines in baby boomers and older people .... 25
Table 2.7: Literature regarding main type of medicines use in baby boomers and older people ...... 28
Table 2.8: Summary of the association between age and medicines use ................................. 31
Table 2.9: Summary of the association between gender and medicines use .............................. 32
Table 2.10: Summary of association between country of birth and medicines use .................. 35
Table 2.11: Summary of the association between area of residence and medicines use ............ 36
Table 2.12: Summary of the association between marital status and medicines use .............. 38
Table 2.13: Summary of the association between education and medicines use ..................... 39
Table 2.14: Summary of the association between work status and medicines use ................. 42
Table 2.15: Summary of the association between income and medicines use .......................... 43
Table 2.16: Summary of the association between HBP and medicines use .............................. 45
Table 2.17: Summary of the association between physical activity and medicines use ............ 47
Table 2.18: Summary of the association between alcohol consumption and medicines use ....... 49
Table 2.19: Summary of the association between smoking status and medicines use .............. 50
Table 2.20: Summary of the association between BMI and medicines use ......................... 52
Table 2.21: Summary of the association between high cholesterol level and medicines use .......... 54
Table 2.22: Summary of the association between high blood glucose level and medicines use ....... 56
Table 2.23: Summary of the association between arthritis and medicines use ........................ 58
Table 2.24: Summary of the association between asthma and medicines use .......................... 60
Table 2.25: Summary of the association between diabetes and medicines use ....................... 61
Table 2.26: Summary of the association between CVD and medicines use ........................... 63
Table 2.27: Summary of the association between mental health conditions and medicines use ...... 66
Table 2.28: Summary of the association between health services use and medicines use ........... 71
Table 2.29: Summary of the association between GP visits and medicines use ....................... 72
Table 2.30: Summary of the relationship between QoL and medicines use ............................. 75

Table 3.1: Age of young baby boomers and older people, HOS 1 & 2 ........................................ 82
Table 3.2: Eight dimensions of SF-36 ............................................................................. 84
Table 3.3: Health Omnibus Surveys’ Response Rates ........................................................ 87
Table 3.4: Participation and response rate, NWAHS ......................................................... 96

Table 4.1: Prevalence of medicines use, HOS 1 .................................................................. 112
Table 4.2: Prevalence of medicines use, HOS 2 .................................................................. 116
Table 4.3: Prevalence of combinations of medicines, HOS 2 ............................................. 117
Table 4.4: Prevalence of medicines use, NWAHS ............................................................... 123
Table 4.5: Prevalence of the use of polypharmacy, NWAHS .............................................. 125
Table 4.6: Prevalence of combinations use of medicines, NWAHS ................................... 126
Table 4.7: Prevalence of the use of OTC medicines within prescription medicines users, NWAHS ... 128
Table 4.8: Prevalence of the use of CAM within prescription medicines users, NWAHS ........... 129
Table 4.9: Prevalence of the use of CAM within OTC medicines users, NWAHS .................. 129
Table 4.10: Main groups of medicines are divided according to ATC .................................. 130
Table 4.11: Main groups of the ATC classification, HOS 2 ............................................... 131

Table 5.1: Multivariable analysis of demographic characteristics associated with taking prescription medicine, HOS 1 ......................................................... 145
Table 5.2: Multivariable analysis of demographic characteristics associated with taking CAM, HOS 1 ................................................................. 145
Table 9.1: Prevalence of CVD for each age group, NWAHS .................................................. 223
Table 9.2: Demographic characteristics of people with CVD, NWAHS ..................................... 224
Table 9.3: Prevalence of medicines use for people with CVD and without CVD, NWAHS .......... 226
Table 9.4: Chronic conditions for people with CVD, NWAHS ............................................... 227
Table 9.5: Health risk factors for people with CVD, NWAHS .................................................. 228
Table 9.6: Biomedical measurement for people with CVD, NWAHS ........................................ 229
Table 9.7: Univariable analysis of demographic characteristics associated with taking prescription medicine among people with CVD, NWAHS ................................................................. 230
Table 9.8: Univariable analysis of chronic conditions associated with taking prescription medicines among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 231
Table 9.9: Univariable analysis of health risk factors associated with taking prescription medicine among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 231
Table 9.10: Univariable analysis of biomedical measurements associated with taking prescription medicine among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 232
Table 9.11: Univariable analysis of demographic characteristics associated with taking OTC medicines among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 233
Table 9.12: Univariable analysis of chronic conditions associated with taking OTC medicines among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 234
Table 9.13: Univariable analysis of health risk factors associated with taking OTC medicines among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 235
Table 9.14: Univariable analysis of biomedical measurements associated with taking OTC medicines among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 236
Table 9.15: Univariable analysis of demographic characteristics associated with taking CAM among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 237
Table 9.16: Univariable analysis of chronic conditions associated with taking CAM among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 238
Table 9.17: Univariable analysis of health risk factors associated with taking CAM among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 238
Table 9.18: Univariable analysis of biomedical measurements associated with taking CAM among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 239
Table 9.19: Univariable analysis of demographic characteristics associated with polypharmacy among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 240
Table 9.20: Univariable analysis of chronic conditions associated with polypharmacy among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 241
Table 9.21: Univariable analysis of health risk factors associated with taking polypharmacy among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 241
Table 9.22: Univariable analysis of biomedical measurements associated with polypharmacy among people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 242
Table 9.23: Multivariable analysis of factors associated with taking prescription medicine among baby boomers with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 243
Table 9.24: Multivariable analysis of factors associated with taking CAM for people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 243
Table 9.25: Multivariable analysis of factors associated with polypharmacy for people with CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 244
Table 9.26: PCS and MCS for those with CVD and without CVD, NWAHS ................................. 245
Table 9.27: Association between medicines use and PCS & MCS for people with and without CVD, NWAHS .............................................................................. 246
List of Figures

Figure 3.1: NWAHS sample in stage 1 ......................................................................................... 90
Figure 4.1: Comparison of demographic characteristics for each age group, HOS 1 & HOS 2 ........ 109
Figure 4.2: Prevalence of medicines use, HOS 1 ........................................................................ 112
Figure 4.3: Prevalence of medicines use, HOS 2 ........................................................................ 118
Figure 4.4: Comparison of medicines use for each age group, HOS 1 & HOS 2 ......................... 120
Figure 4.5: Prevalence of medicines use, NWAHS ................................................................. 123
Figure 4.6: Prevalence of the use of polypharmacy, NWAHS .................................................... 125
Figure 4.7: The use (%) of main groups of the ATC classification, HOS 2 ................................. 132
Figure 7.1: Comparison of the proportion of respondents using any health service in the last month and at least one GP visit, HOS 1 and 2 .................................................................. 187
Figure 8.1: Mean (95%CI) of PCS and MCS, HOS 1 ............................................................... 209
Figure 8.2: Means (95%CI) of PCS and MCS, HOS 2 ............................................................... 210

Appendix

Appendix 4.1 Demographic characteristics of SA baby boomers and older people ................... 282
Appendix 5.1 Medicines use by demographic characteristics .................................................... 287
Appendix 6.1 Distribution of the medicines use for each chronic condition ................................ 304
Appendix 6.2 Demographic characteristics, chronic conditions, health risk factors and medicines use, NWAHS ................................................................. 308
Appendix 7.1 Health services use and GP visits by demographic characteristics .................... 323
Appendix 7.2 Demographic characteristics, medicines use and health services use, GP visits, HOS 1 & 2................................................................................................................. 328
Appendix 7.3 Demographic characteristics, chronic conditions, health risk factors, medicines use and health services use, GP visits, NWAHS ................................................................. 335
Appendix 8.1 Linear regression model of demographic characteristics and medicines use with PCS and MCS .......................................................................................................................... 351
Abstract

There is growing evidence of the increasing use of medicines in older generations; however, research undertaken to critically examine specific differences in use among baby boomers and older people is limited. Understanding the complex factors that influence medicine use by baby boomers and older people is vital due to the particular risks associated with medicines use in older generations. In addition, exploring the differences in medicines usage between these generations will help to inform research and health policy to better meet the health care needs of the ageing population.

This thesis, utilising South Australian (SA) population data, examines the difference in prevalence of use of medicines and the influence of social, demographic, chronic conditions and health related factors on the likelihood of being a user of prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines (OTC) or complementary and alternative medicines (CAM). The thesis also examines the links between medicines use and health outcomes with the evaluation of their beneficial or adverse effects assessed through comparison with quality of life (QoL), health services use and biochemical markers.

Population data from the SA Health Omnibus Survey, an annual face-to-face survey of randomly selected respondents, and the North West Adelaide Health Study (NWAHS) were used. Univariable and multivariable logistic regression analyses were performed in order to investigate the relationships between medicines use and demographic characteristics (including gender, household size, income, education, area of residence, work status, marital status and country of birth). Linear regression analyses were used to determine the relationship between QoL and the independent variables.

The results of the analysis show that the majority of SA baby boomers and older people take a combination of prescription medicines and CAM and a large proportion of older people take a combination of prescription medicines, OTC medicines and CAM. Unemployment was shown to be a key factor for the use of prescription medicines and polypharmacy (five or more medicines), while gender and education were important factors for the use of CAM. The use of CAM and OTC medicines could potentially increase the rate of adverse effects or drug interactions. Therefore, it is important for prescribers to take a detailed medicines history prior to prescribing medicine.
QoL was shown to be lower with increased use of prescription medicines and OTC medicines. However only a weak association was found between the use of CAM and QoL. The specific type of prescription medicines found to be associated with QoL were those prescribed for blood and blood forming organs, musculoskeletal system and nervous system. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) was used as an example of a chronic condition. People with CVD and without CVD had a similar QoL but the increase use of prescription medicines, OTC medicines was associated with lower QoL. Further investigation for association of the use of medicines and QoL is warranted.
Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

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Signed: (Bee Leng Per)

Date: 14th September 2017
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Conference presentations arising from this thesis


Abbreviation

List of acronyms and abbreviations used in the text

ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW  Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AMH  Australian Medicines Handbook
ANOVA  Analysis of variance
ATC  Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical
BMI  Body Mass Index
CAM  Complementary and alternative medicines
CATI  Computer-assisted telephone interviewing
95% CI  95% confidence interval
CVD  Cardiovascular disease
ERP  Estimated resident population
EWP  Electronic White Pages
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GP  General practitioner
HBP  High blood pressure
HDL  High density lipoprotein
IADL  Instrumental activities of daily living
LDL  Low density lipoprotein
MANOVA  Multivariate analysis of variance
MCS  Mental component summary scores
NCCAM  National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
NCD  Non-communicable disease
NICM  The National Institute of Complementary Medicine
NHMRC  National Health and Medical Research Council
NIH  National Institutes of Health
OR  Odds ratio
OTC  Over the counter medicine
PADL  Physical Activities of Daily Living
PCS  Physical component summary scores
PROS  Population Research & Outcome Studies
QOL  Quality of life
QPL  Questionnaire Programming Language
SA  South Australia
SD  Standard deviation
SLAs  Statistical Local Areas
SF36  The Short Form (36) Health Survey
SPSS  Statistical Package for the Social Science
TCM  Traditional Chinese Medicine
TC  Total cholesterol
TG  Triglyceride
TGA  Therapeutic Goods Administration
UK  United Kingdom
UN  United Nations
USA  United States of America
VIF  Variance inflation factor
WHO  World Health Organisation