

 Content archived on 2024-06-18



Prevalence, 1-year incidence and symptom severity of mental disorders in the elderly: Relationship to impairment, functioning (ICF) and service utilisation

Results in Brief

Mental illness among the elderly


Mental illness among the elderly



HEALTH



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This project, [MENTDIS ICF65+](#) , involved six European and European Associated Countries (Germany, Israel, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). The goal of this collaborative effort was to identify seniors in need of mental health services and to raise awareness about this issue.

The work included four stages. The first involved a comprehensive effort to adapt an assessment instrument for the elderly. The new instrument, CIDI65+, was not as long, broken down into shorter sub-sets of questions, and was combined with section-specific sensitisation questions. The instrument was then pilot tested with 55 subjects, aged 60 to 79 years, to determine its reliability. Testing found that it was able to diagnose somatoform, mood, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder, as well as evaluate level of mental impairment and distress.

During the third stage, 3 142 older men and women (above age 65) living in community settings were assessed to determine prevalence rates of mental illness. In the fourth stage, a sample of 2 368 participants tested during the third stage were reassessed to examine the 1-year incidence rate.

Results from the third stage found that nearly half of the sample suffered from a mental disorder in their lifetime, nearly one third had experienced psychological symptoms within the last year and nearly one quarter were currently experiencing a mental disorder. Prevalence rates were higher than those found in other epidemiological studies. At the same time, mental health services were underutilised, pointing to the need for strategies to educate communities about available interventions.

The 1-year follow-up study with 2 368 subjects found that new incidences of mental disorders also occur in old age. These findings emphasise the need to implement special mental health care services for the elderly across Europe. Furthermore, educational campaigns should be initiated to raise public awareness, lower stigmatisation and increase access to mental health services.

Keywords

Mental health, health services, seniors, assessment instrument, mental disorder, educational campaign

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Project Information

MENTDIS_ICF65+

Grant agreement ID: 223105

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Project closed

Start date

1 October 2008

End date

31 March 2013

Funded under

Specific Programme "Cooperation": Health

Total cost

€ 3 919 217,00

EU contribution

€ 2 997 684,00

Coordinated by

UNIVERSITAETSKLINIKUM
HAMBURG-EPPENDORF

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European Union, 2025