

Mental health assessment in health check can improve recognition of unacknowledged poor mental health: A large-scale cohort study

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Background

Poor mental health (MH) is a growing public health concern with human, social, and economic costs. Early recognition of poor MH allows prevention, but is still not systematic delivered in primary care.

This study evaluated the use of MH assessment in general health check.

Aim

1. Investigate association between MH, physical health, and socio-demography among participants in health check
2. Examine level of MH care among persons recognized with poor MH

Methods

Cohort study, 9767 randomly selected 30-49-year-olds invited to health check; 4871 (50%) participated and reported on MH; 49% were men.

Data obtained from questionnaires and national registers.

Poor MH defined from SF-12 as mental health component score ≤ 35.76 .

MH care: At least one of the following within 12 months prior to date of participation: Psychotropic medication, psychological therapy, psychometric test used by GP, and/or contact to psychiatrist.

Results

Poor MH reported by 7% of the men and 11% of the women. Low education (24 vs. 13%) and living alone (32 vs. 20%) more commonly associated with poor MH than with better MH.

Persons with poor MH were more likely smokers (29%) than persons with better MH (17%). Twelve % with poor MH and 7% with better MH were burdened by more than 3 chronic diseases.

Fifty-five % of participants with poor MH did not receive MH care.

Conclusion

Health checks that include MH assessment can improve recognition of persons with poor MH.

People with poor MH identified at health check are more disadvantaged regarding physical health and socioeconomic status.

More than half of persons with poor MH did not receive MH care.

Implications

This health check is performed in the existing Danish health system, thus results are realistic and applicable for future health initiatives. If we aim to implement health checks to improve public health, MH assessment can be relevant to include.

References

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