

Title: Identification of mental health problems in infants from the general population.

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OR

Poster presentation:

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Abstract : Children's mental health problems are major challenges to public health. Previous research suggests potentials of infant mental health screening within the existing child health surveillance delivered by community health nurses (CHN) [1, 2].

The Copenhagen Infant Mental Health Screening, CIMHS, is a new measure developed to screen for mental health problems at child age 9-10 months [3].

The study aims to investigate feasibility and psychometric properties of the CIMHS within the existing service settings of CHN; and explore to what extent the measure can identify predictors of mental health disorders at child age 1½ years.

The feasibility and validity were examined in 11 municipalities located around the city of Copenhagen. The study population was 2,973 infants, who were screened by CHNs at age 9-10 months. A subsample of 416 children were assessed at age 18-20 months by face to face examinations and diagnosed according to the International Statistical Classification of Disease, ICD-10, and Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders, DC:0-3.

The feasibility was explored by descriptive and explorative statistics. The Construct validity was tested by means of item response theory (IRT). Predictive validity was investigated in children screened by CHNs using the CIMHS and assessed regarding the presence of mental health disorders at age 1½ years. Prospective associations between problems identified and mental health disorders at 18 months were examined by univariate and logistic regression analyses.

The CIMHS is feasible within existing service settings [3]. The measure consist of a construct valid overall scale, and seven individually construct valid subscales of eating, sleep, emotional reactions,

attention, motor activity, communication and language respectively. The CIMHS identifies two latent classes of infants, different regarding their number and patterns of problems [4], and predicted mental disorders at 1½ year across the diagnostic spectrum of ICD-10 and DC:0-3R diagnoses [5].

The results suggest that CIMHS can be used as an overall mental health screening at 9-10 months, with a CIMHS score index a need of CHN attention on the mental health of the child. The CIMHS subscales may guide a differentiated approach of interventions. This study is the first step in the development of a program of preventive intervention towards mental health problems in young children.

Key reference

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