Peer Review Report

Review Report on A cross-sectional study of the prevalence and determinants of common mental health problems in primary care in Switzerland

Original Article, Int J Public Health

EVALUATION

Q 1   **Please summarize the main findings of the study.**

This study examined the prevalence of common mental health symptoms in a primary care patient population in Switzerland through a cross-sectional analysis of questionnaire responses from 1103 participants. The findings revealed that a notable portion of patients experienced moderate-to-high levels of mental distress, stress, and sleep disorders. Sociodemographic factors such as gender, age, and GP consultation frequency were linked to increased mental distress. Despite regular GP monitoring, a mere 2.4% reported psychiatric diagnoses, indicating potential underdiagnosis. The study stressed the pivotal role of GPs in recognizing and managing mental health issues, while also emphasizing the necessity for improved collaboration with mental health specialists and addressing social determinants of mental health for effective primary care management.

Q 2   **Please highlight the limitations and strengths.**

Strengths:
The study's strengths include its focus on a specific primary care patient population monitored by general practitioners (GPs), providing direct relevance to primary care contexts and patient interactions. The utilization of a tablet-based questionnaire facilitated standardized and efficient data collection, enabling a substantial sample size and robust statistical analyses. The study's identification of strong associations between sociodemographic factors (such as gender, age, and consultation frequency) and mental distress contributes valuable insights into the determinants of mental health within the primary care setting. Moreover, the research emphasizes the pivotal role of GPs in mental health care and underscores the need for enhanced collaboration between GPs and mental health specialists, addressing a crucial aspect of comprehensive patient management.

Limitations:
Several limitations must be considered in interpreting the study's findings. Recall bias among patients may have led to variations in accurately recalling diagnoses and treatments, potentially introducing discrepancies between reported diagnoses and prescribed treatments. The cross-sectional design of the study restricts the establishment of causal relationships, preventing the examination of temporal associations between variables. The study's use of a subset of questions from a larger survey limits the depth of exploration into each aspect of mental health. Additionally, the low percentage of patients reporting psychiatric diagnoses suggests possible underdiagnosis, while the absence of information on non-pharmacological treatments hinders a comprehensive understanding of treatment approaches. Finally, it's important to emphasize that the data utilized in this study pertain to the years 2015-2016, reflecting a period from several years ago and potentially not encompassing recent developments in the field.

Q 3   **Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.**

(See attachment)

PLEASE COMMENT

Q 4   **Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?**

Add in the title that it is about GPs (except if primary care only consists of GPs).

Q 5   **Are the keywords appropriate?**

Add the keyword stress as this is also one of the outcome variables. Some of the key values are written with a capital letter, others without.

Q 6   **Is the English language of sufficient quality?**

Yes.

Q 7   **Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?**

Yes.

Q 8   **Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?)**

Yes.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Q 9   **Originality** — 4/5

Q 10   **Rigor** — 2/5

Q 11   **Significance to the field** — 4/5

Q 12   **Interest to a general audience** — 4/5

Q 13   **Quality of the writing** — 4/5

Q 14   **Overall scientific quality of the study** — 3/5

REVISION LEVEL

Q 15   **Please make a recommendation based on your comments:**

Minor revisions.