Depression: prevalence recorded by GPs in Suffolk

If you only read four things:
1. The NHS publishes figures from GP registers of patients with depression.
2. Prevalence rates for depression for the three CCGs that cover Suffolk are 9.3-9.5%.
3. Variation between practices may be genuine, or due to variations in diagnoses or data input.
4. There is a moderate correlation between prevalence of depression and levels of deprivation in Suffolk.

Key points
General practices are encouraged, as part of the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), to identify cases of depression, using a standardised score, the PHQ9, and to code these within their computerised clinical records.

These patients then form a register of patients with depression at the practice. The results are published as part of the Quality and Outcomes Framework.¹

The numbers

Incidence
Of the 130 people with depression per 1,000 population, only 80 will consult their GP. Of these 80 people, 49 may not be recognised as having depression at their first appointment. This is mainly because they contact their GP because of a somatic (physical) symptom and do not consider themselves as having a mental health problem.²

Table 1: incidence and prevalence of depression, % practice register aged 18+, 2016/17³
Prevalence

There were 49,315 people diagnosed with depression across Suffolk’s two main CCGs in 2016/17 (30,111 for Ipswich & East Suffolk, 18,804 for West Suffolk), and 19,466 for Great Yarmouth & Waveney. This gives prevalence rates of 9.4% for Ipswich & East Suffolk CCG, 9.3% for West Suffolk CCG and 9.5% for Great Yarmouth & Waveney CCG\(^1\).

The bar chart below (Figure 3) shows the variability in patients registered with depression by practice and CCG for practices within Suffolk. The prevalence identified from QOF varies from around 4% to almost 20%.

The numerator is the number of patients with record of unresolved depression diagnosed on or after 1 April 2006.

Figure 1: Trends in prevalence of depression\(^4\)

![Figure 1: Trends in prevalence of depression](image)

Figure 2: National trends in prescribing

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Source: OpenPrescribing.net, EBM DataLab, University of Oxford, 2017\(^5\)
Local factors affecting prevalence

The variation in levels may be due to several factors, including:

- true differences in levels of depression
- different diagnostic decisions
- variation in the level of coding
- health inequalities arising from other factors, such as deprivation

The GP practices with the highest levels of depression recorded for each Suffolk CCG are:

- Haven Heath (19.4%), Ipswich & East Suffolk CCG
- Alexandra Road (17.5%), Great Yarmouth & Waveney CCG
- Hardwicke House (14.7%), West Suffolk CCG
Figure 3: QOF prevalence of depression: Patients (18 years +) registered with general practices in Suffolk County Financial year 2016/17

Crude prevalence with 95% confidence interval

General practice

CCG or district
What are the key inequalities in Suffolk?

Suffolk County Council’s Public Health Knowledge & Intelligence Team have considered whether there is a correlation between QOF prevalence of depression and the area’s relative deprivation for patients registered with general practices in Suffolk in the financial year 2016/17.

Figure 4: Scatterplot with regression line

A linear regression model fitted to these data indicated a statistically significant association between QOF prevalence of depression in patients aged 18 years and over registered with general practices in Suffolk County in 2016/17 and estimated IMD 2015 scores ($P=0.003$).

The association is moderate: 11.1% of the variation in prevalence of depression in patients in these general practices is explained by deprivation ($R^2=0.1119$). For each unit increase in deprivation, prevalence of depression increased by 0.14% (95% confidence interval of slope: 0.05%, 0.24%).
Costs

Figure 5: Spend on antidepressant drugs per 1,000 patients on list (June 2018)

Source: OpenPrescribing.net, EBM DataLab, University of Oxford, 2017

Figure 6: Antidepressant drugs vs patients on the list for the 3 Suffolk CCGs (June 2018)

Source: OpenPrescribing.net, EBM DataLab, University of Oxford, 2017
Table 2: Spend on antidepressant drugs by Suffolk CCG (June 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCG</th>
<th>Spend</th>
<th>Patients on list</th>
<th>Spend per 1,000 patients</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ipswich &amp; East Suffolk</td>
<td>£141,748.41</td>
<td>408,199</td>
<td>£347.25</td>
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<td>West Suffolk</td>
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<td>£382.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Yarmouth &amp; Waveney</td>
<td>£94,036.93</td>
<td>239,904</td>
<td>£391.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OpenPrescribing.net, EBM DataLab, University of Oxford, 2017

Useful links

Related Suffolk Mental Health Needs Assessment topics
- Common mental disorders
- Projecting the prevalence of mental health problems

References