



Diagnostic prevalence of mental disorders in children and adolescents in Germany: an analysis of nationwide claims data of ambulatory care from 2009 to 2017

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Abstract

Background

Although mental health problems in children and adolescents are common, current data on their occurrence in outpatient care in Germany are lacking. This study presents nationwide data on the diagnostic prevalence of mental disorders in children and adolescents in Germany and characterizes mental health care use of affected children and adolescents.

Methods

The study was based on all ambulatory physician billing claims from 2009 to 2017 of residents with statutory health insurance in Germany, covering 87% of the total German population. The study population were children and adolescents aged younger than 18 years. We investigated the group of mental disorders as a whole as well as the main groups of disorders separately. Different case definitions were applied based on the number of quarters within a given year with a documented mental disorder to reflect the persistence of the disorders. The diagnostic prevalence was calculated for each year as the proportion of children and adolescents fulfilling the case definition in relation to all children and adolescents with at least one outpatient care contact in the respective year. We finally investigated health care and mental health care use.

Results

The proportion of children and adolescents with a documented mental disorder increased from 23% in 2009 to 28% in 2017. In 2017, a total of 16% and 6% received a diagnosis in at least two quarters and in all four quarters, respectively. Most diagnoses were due to developmental disorders (17% affected children and adolescents in 2017), followed by behavioral and emotional disorders (11% diagnostic prevalence). Mood disorders showed the largest increase in diagnostic prevalence during the observation period. Substantial age and sex dependencies were observed across the types of mental disorder. Pediatricians were involved in the treatment of more than 80% of all cases. Depending on the type of disorder, between 35% (developmental disorders) and 71% (affective disorders) of children and adolescents were treated by general practitioners. The use of mental health care varied according to type of disorder.

Conclusions

The present study indicates a substantial and increasing burden of mental disorders among children and adolescents in Germany in recent years and highlights a central role of pediatricians but also general practitioners in the care of those affected. The use of mental health care varied substantially across types of disorder. Asthma, diagnostic prevalence, diagnostics, incidence, spatial autocorrelation, spatial cluster

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Keywords

Adolescents, children, depression developmental disorders, diagnosis prevalence, mental disorders, prevalence

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