Patterns of Use in Mental Health Specialised Care: Treated Prevalence in the Portuguese Mental Health Services

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1. Introduction

As stated by WHO in 2003 the perspective in which services are organised helps to define the effectiveness not only of care but also of access to care. Mental Health Services organisation should be based on principles of accessibility, coordination, continuity, effectiveness and equity of care, in a clear respect for human rights.

To do this, service planners and providers have to determine the exact mix of different types of mental health services and the treatment gap levels.

2. Objectives

1. Estimate the treated prevalence of mental disorders in the mental health specialised services. 2. Estimate the existing treatment gap.

3. Methods

An analysis of the patterns of use in mental health secondary care services was made using data from the national information health system, compiled by the Directorate General of Health - Information Analysis Unit.

4. Results

22.146 patients were treated in the specialised services for mental health disorders, in 2013. This group represents 1,43% of the total patients treated for all health problems and 0,21% of total population. Average length of stay was 16,46 days.

Depression was the main diagnosis in 33% of all patients treated, representing 22% of total inpatient days.

5. Conclusion
Taking in account that the global annual prevalence of mental disorders in Portugal is 22,9% and that 6,3% are severe mental disorders, there is still a big treatment gap in Portugal. In addition, depression still accounts for a substantial proportion of patients treated in the specialised services inpatient units.