

Life isn't always beautiful: risk factors and health-seeking behavior for depression in Italy, PASSI 2007

Introduction: Depression is the leading cause worldwide of years lived with disability and has substantial personal, familial and economic costs. Although some population studies have been performed in Italy, few recent and local data are available on depression symptoms and related health-seeking behaviors. To examine this issue, we used preliminary data from PASSI, the Italian behavioral risk factor surveillance system. **Methods:** In PASSI, telephone interviews are conducted monthly by local health staff of a random sample of residents aged 18-69 drawn from local health registers. This analysis includes data collected in 50 of the country's 195 LHM in the first 4 months of survey operation. Persons were asked how many days over the past 2 weeks they 1) had experienced little interest or pleasure in doing things and 2) had felt down, depressed or hopeless. Each response was assigned a 0-3 score based on number of days and individual total scores were calculated (maximum 6). Those with scores ≥ 3 were considered depressed. **Results:** All interviewees responded to the questions, although 4% were unable to specify number of days. Seven percent were depressed, of whom 35% sought medical care; 40% hadn't sought help from anyone. Depression and HRQOL indicators were highly correlated. Depression risk factors in multivariate analysis included having financial difficulties, women, age 35-49 years, being unemployed, being unmarried, and having ≥ 1 chronic illness. **Conclusions:** Preliminary results indicate that acceptance and construct validity of the questions was high. Efforts are needed to encourage persons with depression symptoms to seek medical care.

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