



Original article

ACTA FAC MED NAISS 2007; 24 (3): 101-105

Aleksandar Visnjic^{1,2}
 Miodrag Stojanovic^{1,2}
 Olivera Radulovic^{1,2}
 Natasa Milosavljevic²

¹ Public Health Institute Nis

² Faculty of Medicine in Nis

UTILIZATION FACTOR IN USING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR NIS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

SUMMARY

The aim of the paper was to define the capacity of health service in the field of mental health protection, with regard to utilization, adequacy and availability, as well as to ascertain the real needs of students for the use of these services.

The prospective study was conducted at the University of Nis, analyzing the sample of 336 students from the Faculties of Medicine, Law and Philosophy. The investigation was performed by means of polling the students about the existence of symptoms of mental health disorders, needs for professional help, and utilization of mental health protection service.

Of the students investigated, there were 212 (64%) females and 124 (36%) males. The mean age of the students was 22.3 ± 2.0 years, whereupon there were no statistical significant differences in the age of examinees from different faculties. The Mantel-Hanzel test showed that the number of female students was significantly higher in the group of examinees from the Faculties of Medicine ($\chi^2=25.6$, $p<0.001$) and Philosophy ($\chi^2=5.25$, $p<0.05$). The variance analysis did not show the existence of differences in degree of utilization of professional help of psychologists and psychiatrists with regard to the faculty. Differences exist in needs for professional help in regard to the faculty ($F=5.45$, $p<0.01$).

The degree of utilization of the health service capacities is approximately 30% compared to the symptoms reported. There were no differences in degree of utilization of professional help of psychologists/psychiatrists with regard to the faculty. It is necessary to establish a close cooperation between higher school departments and students' polyclinics and maximally engage all the available staff and resources in the mutual activities.

Key words: health protection of students, mental health

INTRODUCTION

Health of young people (aim 4) and Advancement of mental health (aim 6) are classified into the aims of the World Health Organization's global strategy for the region of Europe until 2020. Generally, aim 4 plans that up to 2020 young people in the region should be more healthy and capable of

performing their social duties. Aim 6 plans that up to 2020 psychosocial well-being should be improved, with making all professional services more available to people having mental health disorders.

Especially:

6.1. Harmful effects of problems to mental health should be considerably reduced, while abilities of people to cope stressful events in life

should be increased.

6.2. Suicide rate should be reduced by 1/3 at least, with maximal reduction in the countries and population with current high rates.

Achieving the aforementioned aims in the Republic of Serbia, among general as well as the students' population, will certainly be followed by some difficulties typical of our environment.

Based on the study "Health conditions, health needs and utilization of health protection by the population of Serbia" conducted during 2000 on the sample of 11.742 subjects, the following data were obtained: according to subjective estimation, 44% of the total population had depressive symptoms, 20% of which had marked symptoms, 24% had insomnia, and 62% of the examinees were nervous. Approximately 10% of the examinees answered to be under stress/tension, while emotional problems were registered in more than 40% of the examinees (1).

Having in mind particular sensitivity of the young, especially the students' population, the supposition is that these problems are highly expressed.

In the study of self-evaluation conducted among the freshmen at the University of Edinburgh, Kidd concluded that "the best way to find out which students are exposed to some psychiatric disorders is to ask them". Kidd was able to confirm the veracity of mental disease self-evaluation, comparing clinical information about students who consulted doctors with their mental health self-evaluations (2).

AIMS

The basic aims of the investigation were:

- To determine the real students' needs for utilization of mental health protection service;
- To define the existing capacities of these services in the sense of utilization, adequacy, and availability;
- To formulate the promotion program suggestions for the students' population mental health.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The prospective study was conducted at the University of Nis, analyzing the sample of 336 students from the Faculties of Medicine, Law and Philosophy. The investigation was performed by means of polling the students about the existence of symptoms of mental health disorders, needs for professional help, and utilization of mental health protection service.

Statistical processing of the obtained data included the application of descriptive tests and

analytical parametric and nonparametric tests (Student's test, χ^2 test, Fisher's Exact Probability Test, one way Anova test). The results are presented in tables and figures. Statistical processing was done by SPSS 11.0 program within Windows XP operative system.

In the paper, the routine health care statistics data taken from health institutions dealing with mental health protection of citizens in Nis were used (Institute of Mental Health Protection and Clinic of Psychiatry in Nis, Institute of Students' Health Protection in Nis, as well as the data base of the Public Health Institute of Serbia "Dr Milan Jovanovic Batut" in Belgrade from the study "Health condition, health needs and utilization of health protection of citizens of Serbia in 2000."

RESULTS

The prospective study was conducted at the University of Nis, analyzing the sample of 336 students from the Faculties of Medicine, Law and Philosophy. The characteristics of the examinees are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. General characteristics of the polled students

	No	%	Male		Female		Age (years)
			No	%	No	%	
Philosophy	81	24.1	30**	8.9	51	15.2	21.8±2.2
Medicine	171	50.9	54***	16.1	117	34.8	21.9±2.0
Law	84	25.0	40	11.9	44	13.1	23.4±1.5
Total	336	100	124	36.0	212	64.0	22.3±2.0

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$;

Of the students investigated, there were 212 (64%) females, and 124 (36%) males. The mean age was 22.3±2.0 years, whereupon there was no statistically significant difference in the age of the examinees from different faculties. The Mantel-Hanzel test showed that the number of female students was significantly higher in the group of examinees from the Faculties of Medicine ($\chi^2=25.6$, $p < 0.001$) and Philosophy ($\chi^2=5.25$, $p < 0.05$). (Table 1).

Distribution of symptoms of mental disorders

The investigated and analyzed symptoms of mental health disorders, reported by students, were divided into three groups: organic, neurogenic and psychogenic (Table 2, 3, 4).

Table 2. Existence of organic symptoms of mental disorders

	Insomnia		Anorexia		Stomach aches		Exhaustions	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total	109	32	18	5	62	18	108	32

Table 3. Existence of neurogenic symptoms of mental disorders

	Neurosis		Anxiety		Ticks		Migraine	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total	156	46	69	20	6	1.8	61	18

Table 4. Existence of psychogenic symptoms of mental disorders

	Depressive symptoms		Suicidal thoughts		Emotional disorders	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total	31	9	5	1.5	23	7

Utilization of health services in the field of students' mental health protection

The need for professional help and number of students asking for professional help of psychologists and psychiatrists were analyzed in regard to the faculty (Table 5).

Table 5. Need for seeking professional psychiatry help by faculty

Faculties	Need for Psych.		Talked to Psych.	
	No	%	No	%
Philosophy	13**	16	8	10
Medicine	9	5	6	3
Law	6	7	4	5
Total	28	8	18	5

** $p < 0.01$

The variance analysis did not show any differences in degree of utilization of psychologists and psychiatrists' professional help in regard to the faculty.

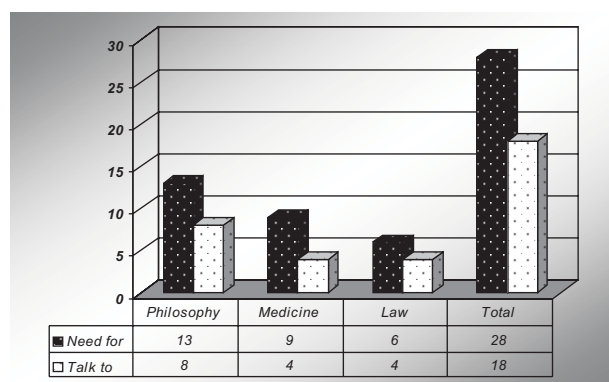


Fig. 1. Need for seeking professional psychiatry help by faculty

However, there is a difference in the need for professional help with regard to the faculty ($F=5.45$, $p < 0.01$) (Fig. 1). The contrast test showed statistically significantly decreased need for professional help of psychologists and psychiatrists in the students of the Faculties of Medicine and Law compared to the students of the Faculty of Philosophy ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$ respectively).

DISCUSSION

A frequent problem of students is the lack of working plan and motivation to study. In addition, there is tremor before taking examination, followed by stronger symptoms, such as insomnia, diarrhea, concentration disorders, vomiting, nervousness and crying – sometimes, tremor borders with panic (3). The experience today greatly differs from that until the 80-ies in the past century. Recent investigations conducted in the Great Britain has showed that percentage of mental health disorders or psychological problems in the students' population goes up to 40%, the majority of which suffers from depression or anxiety disorders, or both. The majority of authors in these researches emphasize that the number of students having mental health problems has increased as well as severity of the problems. In addition, there is a growing belief that the levels of stress in student population are highly increased (4,5).

The paper results undoubtedly indicate that degree of health service utilization is only 30% when compared to reported symptoms of students, and that their utilization with regard to self-recognition of needs is 60%.

The students who did not directly answer to have the need for professional help but said to have some of the mental health disorders were not considered, as well as those who frequently used to take tranquillizers, or regularly consumed alcohol or drugs and were at high risk of mental health disorders (6,7). In such cases, it is possible that disease has already appeared, but is masked (8,9).

The study by Shelton shows that the lack of control over life, as well as the lack of family and community support can be the main reasons for disease non-recognition. Though participants of this research reported being lost and depressed, they rather chose to be "tough" than sick (10).

The majority of people with emotional disorders can be treated successfully due to the existence of effective psychological and pharmacological treatments. Even though more than half of the patients were registered in the health care system, usually their symptoms were not diagnosed, and therewith could not have been treated.

Numerous studies on emotional disorders among students have showed that these disorders were misdiagnosed and mistreated. Failure in detection of these disorders will unfortunately lead to increase in psychological morbidity with some side effects occurring in their careers and lives (11,12).

Early detection diminishes duration of emotional disorder episode, and, in the long run, results in less social deterioration (13). Therefore, emotional disorders must be eliminated or minimized in the early stage.

Mino et al. investigated the effects of one-hour educational programme intended to change students' attitudes to mental diseases. During this investigation, questionnaires were distributed to students before and after the course in order to assess the achieved effect. After the course, much more students said that they could accept the ex-patients, but at a relatively close social distance. The changes were found in the examined group in the sense of defining some terms, such as "psychiatric service", "human rights of mentally diseased people", "independence of patients in social life", "cause and characteristics of mental diseases". There were no changes in the control group (14).

This investigation shows that attitude towards mental diseases can be effectively changed, and it is of key importance for the self-estimation of mentally diseased students.

CONCLUSION

1. Utilization degree of the health service capacities amounts to 30% compared to reported symptoms.

2. There were differences in degree of utilization of professional help of psychologist / psychiatrist when compared to the faculty.

3. The students of the Faculty of Philosophy needed professional help for mental health disorders,

but degree of health services' utilization was similar regardless of the faculty.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

Mental health disorder is very important to be detected at the very beginning of its development so as to apply an appropriate treatment, either in the sense of counseling, work in groups or medication therapy.

A special role in mental health prevention is ascribed to early detection in the students' polyclinics. It is necessary to establish a close cooperation between higher school departments and students' polyclinics and maximally engage all the available staff and resources in the mutual activities.

It is important to mention that I am a health worker who, besides having control over methods of work with patients, is influential as someone who incorporates his personality into professional work. This influence is important for the kind of health care protection that a patient receives. This is important both for the practice and education in health care protection.

Therefore, it is important to inform doctors and other health care workers employed in the primary mental health care on the available possibilities, including resources, as well as their responsibilities (15).

Especially, we should emphasize that programmes of prevention and health promotion adopted at the time of health care reforms and budget instability are very vulnerable. Therefore, in design of future programmes and theoretical approaches to problems, it is important to develop new methodology more carefully and to test them regularly. The accent should be put on sampling, presenting the real state of being, and choosing measures to achieve aims in the long run.

REFERENCES

1. Jovic S. Promocija zdravlja u zajednici: Motivacioni postupak i vestine komunikacije. I Kongres Socijalne medicine Srbije i Crne Gore, uvodno izlaganje, Zbornik radova, 16-21, Vrnjacka Banja 2002.
2. Kidd CB. Psychiatric morbidity among students. *Br J Prev Soc Med* 1965; **19**: 143-50.
3. Melrose S and Shapiro B. Students' perceptions of their psychiatric mental health clinical nursing experience: a personal construct theory exploration. *J Adv Nurs* 1999; **30** (6): 1451-8.
4. Maniam T. Psychiatry morbidity in an urban general practice. *Med J Malaysia* 1994; **49**: 242-6.
5. Oxford Student Mental Health Network. A Brief Report on the Findings of the First Year's Research. The OSMHN Interviews. Oxford: Oxford Student Mental Health Network. www.brookes.ac.uk/student/srvices/osmhn.
6. Saroja KI. Current perspectives on community psychiatry. *Malaysian J Psychiatry* 1994; **2**: 90-4.
7. Schwenk TL, Coyne JC, Fechner-Bates S. Difference between detected and undetected patients in primary care and depressed psychiatric patients. *Gen Hosp Psychiatry* 1996; **18**: 407-15.
8. Waring T, Hazell T, Hazell P and Adams J. Youth mental health promotion in the Hunter region. *Austr N Z J Psychiatry* 2000; **34** (4): 579-85.
9. Williams JBW, Spitzer RL, Linzer M et al. Gender differences in depression in primary care. *Am J Obstet Gynecol* 1995; **173**: 654-9.
10. Shelton D. Experiences of Detained Young Offenders in Need of Mental Health Care. *J Nurs Scholarsh* 2004; **36** (2): 129-33.

11. Firth-Cozens J. Emotional distress in junior house officers. *BMJ* 1987; **295**: 533–6.

12. Jacobs KS. Community care for people with mental disorders in developing countries. Problems and possible solutions. *Br J Psychiatry* 2001; **178**: 296–8.

13. Finlay-Jones RA, Burvill PW. The prevalence of minor psychiatric morbidity in the community. *Psychol Med* 1971; **7**: 475–89.

14. Mino Y, Yasuda N, Tsuda T, and Shimodera S. Effects of a one-hour educational program on medical students' attitudes to mental illness. *Psychiatry Clin Neurosc* 2001; **55** (5): 501–7.

15. Wolf TM, Faucett JM, Randall HM. A health promotion program for medical students: Louisiana State University Medical Centre. *Am J Health Promot* 1990; **4**: 193–202.

STEPEN ISKORIŠĆENOSTI ZDRAVSTVENE SLUŽBE STUDENATA UNIVERZITETA U NIŠU ZA POREMEĆAJE MENTALNOG ZDRAVLJA

Aleksandar Višnjic^{1,2}, Miodrag Stojanovic^{1,2}, Olivera Radulovic^{1,2}, Nataša Milosavljevic²

¹ Institut za javno zdravlje u Nišu, ² Medicinski fakultet u Nišu

SAŽETAK

Cilj rada bio je definisanje postojećih kapaciteta zdravstvene službe u oblasti zaštite mentalnog zdravlja u smislu iskorišćenosti, adekvatnosti i pristupačnosti, kao i utvrđivanje realnih potreba studenata za korišćenjem ovih usluga.

Studija je prospektivna i obavljena je na Univerzitetu u Nišu, na uzorku od 336 studenata sa Medicinskog, Pravnog i Filozofskog fakulteta. Ispitivanje je izvršeno anketiranjem studenata o postojanju simptoma poremećaja mentalnog zdravlja, potrebama za stručnom pomoći, kao i korišćenju usluga zdravstvene zaštite mentalnog zdravlja.

Od ispitivanog broja studenata, 212 (64%) je bilo ženskog i 124 (36%) muškog pola. Prosečna starost studenata bila je 22.3±2.0 godine, pri čemu nije bilo statistički značajne razlike u starosti između ispitanika sa različitih fakulteta. Urađeni Mantel-Haenzel-ov test pokazuje da je broj studenata ženskog pola bio značajno veći u grupi ispitanika sa Medicinskog ($\chi^2=25.6$, $p<0.001$) i Filozofskog fakulteta ($\chi^2=5.52$, $p<0.05$). Urađena analiza varijanse nije pokazala postojanje razlika u stepenu korišćenja stručne pomoći psihologa ili psihijatra u odnosu na fakultet. Razlika postoji u potrebi za stručnom pomoći kod studenata u odnosu na fakultet ($F=5.45$, $p<0.01$).

Stepen korišćenja postojećih kapaciteta zdravstvene službe iznosi svega 30% u odnosu na prijavljene simptome. Nije pokazano postojanje razlika u stepenu korišćenja stručne pomoći psihologa/psihijatra u odnosu na fakultet. Potrebno je uspostaviti tesnu vezu visokoškolskih službi sa studentskim poliklinikama i maksimalno uključiti njihov raspoloživi kadar i resurse u pretpostavljenom zajedničkom delovanju.

Ključne reči: zdravstvena zaštita studenata, mentalno zdravlje