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Characteristics of mental health service use of Brazilian children using routine health records.

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Background

To investigate the clinical epidemiological characteristics of a large data set of visits to outpatient children mental health services in Brazil, as well as to identify relevant relationships between age, sex and three common mental disorders in childhood: pervasive developmental disorders, ADHD and mild depressive disorders.

Methods

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) was the most common condition identified across the country. The analyses by region showed a high number of visits due to mental retardation in the Northeast and depressive episodes in the South. Regressions showed that older children are less likely to visit outpatient services with a diagnosis of ADHD (F90.0).

Findings

625 participants completed measures at 12-months post-initiative (72.8% of baseline sample), representing just over a third of all PHW employees. Of those completing all relevant measures, 57.7% reported increased physical activity levels at 12-months compared to baseline (30.6% decreased; 11.6% no change). 75.3% of the sample met UK physical activity guidelines at 12-months compared to 58.8% at baseline. Individuals with the lowest reported levels of physical activity at baseline (n=223) made the greatest improvements - increasing their weekly moderate physical activity by >2.5 hours. Those with moderate activity (n=269) increased by 58 minutes/week and those with high activity levels (n=50) decreased by >4 hours/week. Overall, a small but statistically significant improvement was seen in mental well-being over the study period (mean scores, 22.4 baseline, 23.2 12-months), with participants with categorised as having low mental well-being at baseline benefitting the most. For self-reported health, 34.7% increased their rating (change of at least 10 points), 54.6% had no change and 10.7% declined. The proportion very/quite satisfied with their job increased from 64.4% to 72.0%, with 33.4% of individuals reporting increased job satisfaction (19.6% decreased).

Conclusions

Our analysis shows the conditions which cause the most burden to the child psychiatry outpatient centers in Brazil and relevant differences between regions. This information has immediate use for the training of staff and allocation of resources in each region.

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