



UKE Paper of the Month November 2014

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Four-week prevalence of mental disorders in patients with cancer across major tumor entities.

Anja Mehnert, Elmar Brähler, Hermann Faller, Martin Härter, Monika Keller, Holger Schulz, Karl Wegscheider, Joachim Weis, Anna Boehncke, Bianca Hund, Katrin Reuter, Matthias Richard, Susanne Sehner, Sabine Sommerfeldt, Carina Szalai, Hans-Ulrich Wittchen, and Uwe Koch

ABSTRACT: **PURPOSE:** To provide the 4-week prevalence estimates of mental disorders in cancer populations. **PATIENTS AND METHODS:** We enrolled adult patients with cancer from in- and outpatient care facilities, using a proportional stratified random sample based on the nationwide cancer incidence in Germany. Patients who scored 9 or above on the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) were administered to the standardized computer-assisted Composite International Diagnostic Interview for mental disorders adapted for cancer patients (CIDI-O). A random sample of those with a PHQ-9 score that was less than 9 were selected for a CIDI-O. **RESULTS:** A total of 5,889 patients were identified, which led to 4,020 participants (a 68.3% response rate); of those, 2,141 patients were interviewed. The 4-week total prevalence for any mental disorder was 31.8% (95% CI, 29.8% to 33.8%); this included any anxiety disorder (11.5%; 95% CI, 10.2% to 12.9%), any adjustment disorder (11.1%; 95% CI, 9.7% to 12.4%), any mood disorder (6.5%; 95% CI, 5.5% to 7.5%), any somatoform/conversion disorder (5.3%; 95% CI, 4.3% to 6.2%), nicotine dependence (4.5%; 95% CI, 3.6% to 5.4%), alcohol abuse/dependence (0.3%; 95% CI, 0.1% to 0.6%), any mental disorder resulting from general medical condition (2.3%; 95% CI, 1.7% to 2.9%), and any eating disorder (0%). The highest prevalence for any mental disorder was found in patients with breast cancer (41.6%; 95% CI, 36.8% to 46.4%), followed by patients with head and neck cancer (40.8%; 95% CI, 28.5% to 53.0%). The lowest prevalence was found in patients with pancreatic cancer (20.3%; 95% CI, 8.9% to 31.6%) and stomach/esophagus cancers (21.2%; 95% CI, 12.8% to 29.6%). **CONCLUSION:** Our findings provide evidence for the strong need for psycho-oncological interventions.

STATEMENT: *The findings of this study reinforce that doctors need to be very aware of signs and symptoms of mental and emotional distress of cancer patients and encourage them to seek evaluation and support and — given the severity and long-term risks associated with untreated mental disorders — eventually a state of the art mental health treatment. This research also sheds light on which patients should be watched more closely. The findings may be useful for planning future support programs for cancer patients, and can provide additional information to guide programs for people with specific cancer types.*

BACKGROUND: The multicenter study, funded by the German Cancer Aid, was coordinated by the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf and participating study centers were the University Medical Centers of Freiburg, Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Würzburg.