

CASE STUDY

The prevalence and impact of depression in self-referred clients attending an employee assistance program: a cross-sectional study

CATEGORISING

Kind

Research project not involving persons

Type

Research project with existing health-related, non-genetic data

Subtype

Research project with existing health-related, encoded non-genetic data

BACKGROUND

This study determined the prevalence and characteristics of employed adults with depression, who attended an external employee assistance program.

METHODS

We obtained data from 9,105 of 10,794 employees suffering from depression who self-referred to an external employee assistance program. The data manager of the assistance program, who was not involved in our project, prepared and provided us with the data. Employees attending the assistance program were coded using a unique identifying number. Data included employees' age (but not exact date of birth) and language region. Outcome measures included the self-rated nine-item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), filled out routinely prior the first counselling visit as part of the assistance program.

QUESTIONS OF THE CATEGORISER

Does the research project come under the scope of application of the Human Research Act?

Yes

BECAUSE

This project was based on a study protocol that defined the exact procedures to be used. The study included a relatively large number of persons and was not based on individual cases ("method-driven search for generalizable knowledge", defined as research by HRA). Its goal was to determine the prevalence and characteristics of people with depression who attended an external employee assistance program ("research concerning human diseases"). The researchers analysed data from employed adults who suffered from a first episode of depression ("health-related personal data"), and who self-referred to the assistance program.

Is the research project a project involving living persons?

No

BECAUSE

The researchers analysed existing data from employed adults who suffered from a first episode of depression, and who self-referred to an external employee assistance program ("health-related data"). The assistance program collected the data for purposes other than our research project (it was routinely collected in the standard assistance program).

Is the research project a project with existing non-genetic health-related data?

Yes

BECAUSE

Researchers analysed existing data from employed adults who suffered from a first episode of depression and who self-referred to an external employee assistance program. The assistance program collected the data for purposes other than our research project (it was routinely collected in the standard assistance program ["existing health-related data"]).

Is the research project a project with existing encoded, non-genetic data?

Yes

BECAUSE

Researchers analysed existing data from employed adults who suffered from a first episode of depression and who self-referred to an external employee assistance program ("existing health-related data"). Participants' names or other identifying information were not included in the data. Participants were coded with a unique identifying number ("encoded non-genetic data"). The key that linked a subject's unique identifying number with their personal data was held by the data manager of the assistance program, who was not involved in the research project.