About 7% of 4-year-olds in Norway meet criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis

**QUESTION**

**Question:** How common are psychiatric disorders in preschoolers in Norway?

**Population:** 2475 children born in 2003 or 2004 who attended the regular community health check-up for 4-year-olds and whose parents consented to take part in the study. Of the 3456 children born in the city in 2003 and 2004, 71.6% participated.

**Setting:** General community, Trondheim, Norway; 2007–2008.

**Assessment:** The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was used as a screening tool to identify behavioural and emotional problems. On the basis of SDQ score, children were stratified and a random sample drawn from each strata for a structured diagnostic interview, with a higher proportion of those with more problems selected (57% of those scoring 0–4 selected; 48% of those scoring 5–11; 70% of those scoring 9–11; 89% of those scoring 12–40). Of the 1250 children selected, the parents of 995 completed the Preschool Age Psychiatric Assessment interview to assess the past 3 months. Assessment of disability relating to the symptoms was based on the World Health Organisation International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. Diagnoses were made using a computer algorithm based on Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV criteria. Weighted analyses were used to calculate general population estimates from the results in the interview sample. Parental occupations were classified using the International Labour Office International Classifications of Occupations, with professionals and leaders classed as having high socioeconomic status (SES), and farmers/fishermen, skilled and unskilled workers classed as having low SES. For cohabiting parents the profession of the highest SES occupation was chosen.

**Outcomes:** Psychiatric disorders.

**METHODS**

**Design:** Cross sectional study.

**MAIN RESULTS**

The estimated population 3 months prevalence of any psychiatric disorder (excluding encopresis) among 4-year-olds was 12.5%. Encopresis was the most common diagnosis (6.4%), and excluding this the 3 months prevalence of any psychiatric disorder was 7.1%. The most common disorders other than encopresis were depressive disorders (2.0%, includes major depressive disorder, depression not otherwise specified and dysthymia), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD, 1.9%), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD, 1.8%), anxiety disorders (1.5%, included separation anxiety, social and specific phobia), and conduct disorder (0.7%). Comorbidity among disorders was common. For example, among those with conduct disorder, 37.7% had ADHD, and 49.1% had ODD. More emotional and behavioural disorders were seen in children whose parents did not live together and in those of low socioeconomic status (4.7% in children of cohabiting parents vs 13.5% in children of non-cohabiting parents, p<0.001; 4.7% in children of ‘leaders and professionals’ vs 11.9% in children of ‘workers’, p<0.001). Boys more often had ADHD and depressive disorders than girls (ADHD: 2.4% in boys vs 1.5% in girls, p=0.05; depressive disorders: 2.6% in boys vs 1.5% in girls, p=0.04).

**CONCLUSIONS**

The prevalence of psychiatric disorders among preschoolers in Norway is estimated to be 7.1% (excluding encopresis). This is lower than in previous studies from the USA. Comorbidity was frequent and there was a male preponderance in ADHD and depression at this early age.

**ABSTRACTED FROM**


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**REFERENCE**