

Elderly patients with severe mental disorder outpatient treatment

Severe mental disorders, i.e. psychosis, severe depression, mania, or bipolar affective disorder are relatively rare conditions and approximately 1-3.5% of the population will experience psychosis at some point in their life. Severe mental disorder can lead to long-term and major loss of function as well as extensive need for care, while others can have a shorter period of illness. Patients with severe mental disorders often receive both outpatient and inpatient treatment from the specialist health services.

Sample and definitions

Patients at the age of 65 years and above who in 2014–2018 had at least one outpatient contact in mental healthcare, interdisciplinary specialised addiction treatment (TSB) or private specialists under public funding contracts, with severe mental disorder as the primary or secondary diagnosis are included. Severe mental disorder (SMD) is defined by the ICD 10-codes F20-29, F30.1, F30.2, F30.8, F30.9, F31, F32.3, F33.3.

Outpatient contacts are defined as contacts where a patient (or next of kin) was physically present, and was admitted and discharged on the same day (includes both outpatient contacts as well as day care). Indirect outpatient contacts are not included here.

Hospital referral area	Number of contacts	Number of patients	Contacts per patient
Lovisenberg	1,560	78	19.9
Diakonhjemmet	1,728	117	14.8
Sørlandet	1,421	106	13.4
St. Olavs	1,369	124	11.0
Telemark	795	80	10.0
OUS	1,314	132	9.9
Bergen	2,143	225	9.5
Vestre Viken	1,542	172	8.9
Ahus	1,299	150	8.6
Fonna	728	89	8.2
Vestfold	668	84	7.9
Østfold	515	68	7.6
Stavanger	914	120	7.6
Helgeland	160	21	7.6
Møre og Romsdal	927	123	7.6
Nord-Trøndelag	571	77	7.4
Innlandet	937	143	6.6
UNN	456	71	6.4
Førde	236	44	5.3
Nordland	145	30	4.9
Finnmark	79	26	3.0
Norway	19,507	2,074	9.4

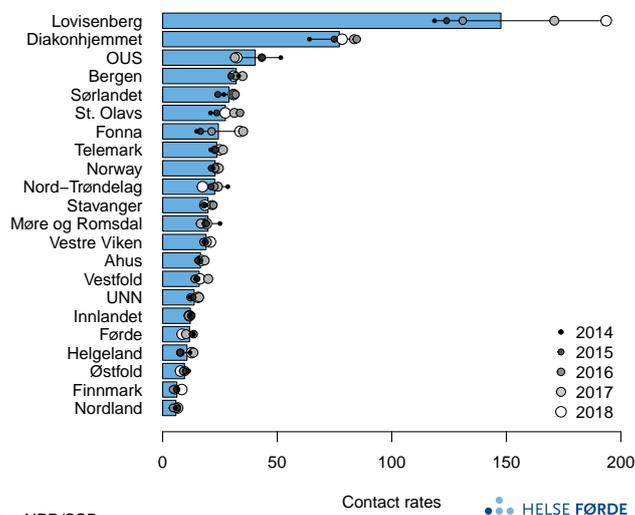
Outpatient treatment of adults with severe mental disorders. Includes contacts with mental healthcare and interdisciplinary specialised addiction services. Number of contacts, number of patients and contacts per patient, broken down by hospital referral area and for Norway as a whole. The figures represent average values per year for the period 2014–2018 and apply to elderly people aged 65 years and older.

Results

Each year around 2,000 elderly patients with severe mental disorders had outpatient treatment in mental healthcare, interdisciplinary specialised addiction treatment or mental healthcare specialists – almost 20,000 outpatient contacts in Norway in total.

The patient rate varied across hospital referral areas from 1.2 to 7.6 elderly patients in outpatient treatment per 1,000 population a year. The contact rate varied from 6 to 148 contacts per 1,000 population a year, with an average of 23.

Elderly patients with severe mental disorder had on average 9 outpatient contacts a year, varying from 3 to 20 contacts across hospital referral areas.



Source: NPR/SSB
 Contact rates, elderly patients with severe mental disorders receiving outpatient treatment. Number of contacts per 1,000 population, broken down by hospital referral area and for Norway as a whole. The bars show the average values per year for the period 2014–2018, and the dots represent the rates for each year. The rates have been adjusted for age and gender.

Comment

The variation in contact rates is particularly large for elderly patients with severe mental disorder. The patient rates are highest in Oslo, where the patients also have nearly seven times more contacts per patients than in Northern Norway.

The high variation in outpatient treatment of patients with severe mental disorders raises concern of underuse of services in parts of the country, and is regarded unwarranted.