

The Impact of the Economic Crisis On Psychiatric Admissions in Portugal: the Smaile Research Project

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Introduction: Mental illness results from biological, psychological, social and contextual factors and is influenced by global events such as economic crises.

Objectives/Aims: To describe the profiles of psychiatric admissions in four Portuguese hospitals located in the metropolitan areas of Lisboa and Porto, and to assess their evolution in 2002, 2007 and 2012, and the changes associated with the economic crisis effects.

Methods: The information was retrieved from the medical charts of all patients (n= 3,647) admitted at three periods: 2002 (no crisis), 2007 (pre-crisis) and 2012 (crisis). Demographic, social and clinical variables were obtained. The statistical binomial test was used to verify the existence of significantly differences between 2007 and 2012.

Results: The number of admissions increased from 2007 to 2012, with greater variation (22%) in the Disorders related to substance use (ICD-9: 291, 292, 303, 304 e 305). Statistically significant positive changes were found in the admissions of: i) patients aged 50 to 64 years (17%, p=0.022), divorced (25%, p=0.032), and unemployed (58%, p<0.001); ii) patients 50 to 64 that referred having attempted suicide (26%, p=0.067) and suicidal ideation (34%, p=0.022) during that year; iii) women 50 to 64 referring attempted suicide (39% p=0.044) and suicidal ideation (39% p=0.044).

Conclusions: Our findings suggest the influence of the economic crisis in the number and profile of people admitted for mental disorders (greater effect in unemployed patients), and its association with an increase of admissions in people with suicide attempts and suicidal ideation, and particularly in women aged 50 to 64.