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Is it cost-effective to prevent mental disorders?

Presenter: Cathy Mihalopoulos, Deakin

Abstract

Introduction: Mental disorders are highly prevalent and associated with considerable disease burden and health expenditure both internationally and in Australia. Suicide is an important sequelae of mental disorders, though not all suicides are associated with mental disorders. While there is an increasing emphasis on the prevention of chronic physical diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes, this is not as evident for mental disorders. The reasons for this are numerous and include a perception that mental disorders are not preventable since there is no easily identifiable and modifiable constellation of risk factors. However there is an emerging and sizable literature demonstrating that there are a number of interventions, largely psychological in nature, which can be effective in preventing the incidence of some mental disorders, particularly major depression in adults and children. Unsurprisingly, the cost-effectiveness of these interventions is largely unknown.

Methods: The current study aims to assess the cost-effectiveness of preventive interventions for mental disorders using a standardised methodology and measure of outcome reliant on economic modelling techniques. This study is part of a larger study evaluating the cost-effectiveness of preventive interventions for non-communicable disease within Australia called the ‘ACE-Prevention study’.

Results: Preliminary results evaluating the cost-effectiveness of preventive psychological strategies for adult depression and post-natal depression demonstrate that such interventions can provide good value for money when a threshold of AUD$50,000 per DALY averted is used. Though issues such as work force availability and financial feasibility need to be addressed before such interventions can become routinely available. Results for the prevention of suicide are currently being determined and will be presented at the conference.

Discussion: The prevention of mental disorders appears to represent good value for money though important second filter considerations need to be addressed before the routine implementation of such interventions. Furthermore the application of a consistent methodology to mental disorders proved to be challenging as there are important data gaps, particularly associated with the epidemiology of such disorders. Implications for future research as well as a discussion of the remaining interventions to be covered by the project within the areas of conduct disorder and psychosis will be presented.

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Session: Is prevention really better than cure? Methods and results of a national study evaluating the cost-effectiveness of preventive interventions (ACE-Prevention)
Time: Tue 8:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m.
Room: 201A