



Mental Health
Innovation Network



Summary Review

Systematic Review

Estimating the coverage of mental health programmes: a systematic review

Aim of the Review

A systematic review of studies examining contact and effective coverage of mental health programmes, in order to inform the development of a framework of methods to measure coverage.

Background

The large treatment gap for mental disorders has necessitated wide scale implementation of mental health services to ensure the delivery of adequate mental health care. One keystone of implementation research is adequate evaluation of treatment coverage measured by service need, service utilisation, and programme coverage levels. A framework to assess health service coverage, the Tanahashi framework, describes levels of coverage for services. This includes availability, accessibility, acceptability, contact and effective coverage. This review focuses on evaluations of contact coverage (i.e. ‘persons in need of a service who receive an intervention appropriate to their condition’), and effective coverage (i.e. ‘the probability that individuals will receive health gain from an intervention if they need it’).

Key Messages

1. Evaluation of mental health programmes is crucial for the betterment of services and optimal utilisation of resources. Programme level evaluations should include the collection of data on **contact and effective coverage**, **equity of coverage**, and factors that affect coverage.
2. **Low-cost integration of routine data** at programme level with national level population data on prevalence should be implemented to evaluate the coverage of mental health programmes.
3. Data on the effective coverage of services can provide insights into which types of programmes produce the best and most equitable patient outcomes for the largest number of people; **thereby better informing service planning.**

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To review evidence for ‘actual coverage’ (rather than ‘potential coverage’) corresponding to the levels of service coverage namely ‘contact coverage’ and ‘effective coverage’ of the Tanahashi framework

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Main Results

- There exists a dearth of data on the evaluation of mental health programmes globally, and particularly in lower middle- and low-income countries.
- There is lack of evidence for the contact coverage of mental health programmes, due to several **methodological difficulties**. For instance, its calculation necessitates the collection of routine data on the regional population in need of services, which is often inadequate. Potential solutions to such challenges include:
 - **Collection of routine monitoring data by programmes** (incorporating a range of estimates including patients referred, patients treated, and basic sociodemographic variables).
 - Reliance on **estimated prevalence** in the scientific literature, and utilisation of population estimates (i.e. ratio of number treated per 100 000) in the absence of local prevalence estimates.
- Currently, there is **no evidence for the effective coverage** of programmes for mental disorders. Such estimates primarily rely on clinical outcome data for those treated, which is resource intensive to measure.
- Future efforts are needed to incorporate determinants of coverage in the evaluation of programmes. This will help in improving current programmes or developing new ones, and to ultimately increase coverage.

Recommendations for Researchers

- There is a need for examining the **estimates of coverage** for planning of services as well as **new methods for examining coverage**.
Examples include:
 - Estimating the proportion of people diagnosed with a mental disorder who are in need of services (this group should form the target population which the programme aims to cover, not all those diagnosed with a mental disorder)
 - Incorporating sociodemographic variables to determine the equitability of programme coverage
- **Integration of evaluation of treatment coverage** within the existing monitoring system of programmes.
- Need for **research efforts at a national level**, on prevalence estimates for mental disorders.

INCLUSION CRITERIA

Any treatment programme (delivered to an area of at least 1 administrative health unit) for any mental disorder across the lifespan, delivered in any health care setting,
and

Any study design (reporting quantitative findings of evaluation),
and

Measures of coverage reported.

STUDY CHARACTERISTICS

7 studies were included, all of which focussed on contact coverage.

5 studies from high income countries and 2 from upper middle-income countries.

Evaluation of national (3 studies), regional (2 studies), or district (2 studies) programmes.

QUALITY OF EVIDENCE

Inadequate data on estimates of coverage of programmes, primarily due to methodological difficulties in calculations.

Authors Conclusions

The evaluation of treatment coverage is crucial to the scale up of services for mental disorders, and can be integrated into the existing monitoring system of mental health programmes. These evaluations further serve to improve the quality and resource utilisation of available services, and to inform the development of new services aimed to enhance effective and equitable coverage in the population.

“ Evaluations of mental health programmes in all settings should routinely incorporate measures of contact and effectiveness coverage to improve existing services and to inform efforts to scale up services in settings where there are none.”

[De Silva et al, 2014]

