

Anxiety and Physical Co-Morbidity

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Introduction: Anxiety and somatic disorders are frequently comorbid, especially in the presence of depression and/or substance abuse both in children and adults. Chronic illnesses and exposure to pain in early childhood are major risk factors for anxiety disorders in children.

Objectives: The aims of this study are to estimate the point prevalence of anxiety and somatic disorders and their comorbidity in European adolescents.

Methods: Data were drawn from the Saving and Empowering Young Lives in Europe (SEYLE) study, comprising 12,395 adolescents from 11 European countries. Anxiety was measured by the Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SAS), and the following questions were on physical illnesses: Have you seen a doctor in the last 12 months?, Do you have a physical disability?, Do you suffer from any chronic illness?, Do these discomforts lower your ability or hinder other daily activities?, Overall, how would you describe your state of health these days?

Results: Out of 12395 adolescents more than 80% saw a doctor in the last 12 months, 3% described their state of health poor or very poor, 3% reported of having physical disability and almost 15% reported of suffering from chronic illness. Eight percent of the responders was anxious based on the SAS. Anxiety as measured by SAS total score was significantly associated with describing the state of health as poor or very poor, having physical disability, suffering from chronic illness, reporting that discomforts lower the ability somewhat or certainly.

Conclusions: Patients with psysical illness should be screen for anxiety disorders.