

Prevalence of psychiatric disorders and treatment utilization among lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals

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Recent estimates of psychiatric morbidity among individuals reporting same-gender sexual partners suggest that lesbians, gay men, and bisexual individuals may have greater prevalences of some disorders especially those thought to be sensitive to social stress. However, the majority of this work using population-based surveys has focused on youth and adolescents and few have actually measured sexual orientation. Using data from a national population-based survey of adults, we examined one year prevalence of depressive, anxiety, and substance dependency disorders, indicators of past and current psychological distress, and one year mental health treatment utilization among 2,917 respondents self-identified as homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. In gender-specific analyses, gay/bisexual men compared to heterosexual men evidence higher rates of depression, panic attacks and both current and retrospective psychological distress. In contrast, lesbian/bisexual women had higher rates of generalized anxiety disorder than heterosexual women but did not show higher levels of current distress. Greater prevalence of psychiatric comorbidity was also observed for both lesbian/bisexual women and gay/bisexual men. Indicators of mental health treatment utilization also demonstrated more frequent services use. We conclude that patterns of psychiatric morbidity and mental health treatment services utilization among lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals differ from that seen among heterosexual women and men. Psychiatric interventions need to address the somewhat different needs in this population which may comprise approximately 7% of individuals seeking mental services annually.

Learning Objectives: 1. Describe patterns of risk for common psychiatric disorders in lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. 2. Describe patterns of mental health care utilization in this population 3. Identify mental health treatment issues that may be more prevalent among lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals

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