

Antidepressant use and associations with psychosocial work characteristics. A comparative study of Swedish and Danish gainfully employed

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The study indicates that use of antidepressants among the workforce is relatively high, that employed Swedish residents had higher prevalence of antidepressant use than Danish and that emotional demands at work is associated with incident use of antidepressants.

Background

Although depression is common, prevalence estimates of antidepressant use among the workforce and undisputed evidence relating psychosocial work characteristics to depression is scarce. This study aimed to assess the prevalence of antidepressant use among employed in Sweden and Denmark and study associations between work characteristics and antidepressant use.

Methods

Data on work demands, influence and learning was collected 2005-2006 from two representative samples of employed aged 20-59 years from Sweden (n=4351) and Denmark (n=8064) and linked to purchases of antidepressants through national prescription drug registries. Standardized 12-month prevalences were calculated. Cox regressions on work characteristics and incident use were performed separately and estimates pooled.



Results & Conclusions

Results

Employed Swedish residents had higher standardized prevalence of antidepressant use, 6.0% compared to 5.0%. Working fast and conflicting demands were associated with incident use when estimates were pooled, but adjustment for baseline health attenuated these estimates. Emotionally disturbing situations were related to any incident use, and more strongly to use >179 defined daily dosages/year, even after adjustment for various covariates.

Limitations

Statistics based on national prescription drug registries are influenced by e.g. treatment seeking behaviours and other reasons for prescription than depression. Selective drop-out may also affect prevalence estimates.

Conclusions

The study indicates that use of antidepressants among the workforce is relatively high and that employed Swedish residents had higher prevalence of antidepressant use than Danish. Relationships between work characteristics and antidepressant use were, however, similar with emotional demands showing the strongest association, implicating that particular groups of employees may be at higher risk.

Table 1 Prevalence of antidepressant use in the Swedish (n=4351) and Danish (n=8064) sample of employed

	Prevalent users	Crude prevalence	Standardized prevalence (95% CI) ^a	Standardized prevalence ratio (95% CI)
Total Swedish sample	273	6.27	6.00 (5.93-6.07)	
Danish sample	398	4.94	4.98 (4.93-5.03)	
Swedish/Danish sample				1.21 (1.19-1.22)

^a Standardized by age (5 year categories) and sex

