Measuring the Course of Depression and Anxiety in Adolescence in Population Observational Studies: A Scoping Review

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Background: The extent to which common mental disorders (CMD; anxiety and depression) change across adolescence and over time is needed to inform health planning. While multiwave longitudinal studies have the potential to track the course of CMD across adolescence with much granularity, inconsistent approaches to measuring CMD in different cohorts will limit the ability to compare studies in adolescents of different ages and in different periods of time. We undertook a scoping review to systematically identify the literature examining the course of anxiety and depression across adolescents in longitudinal population studies to understand how the course of CMD has been conceptualized and measured.

Methods: We searched three electronic databases (Medline, Pubmed, PscyInfo) using a search strategy that combined index words/MeSH terms to identify eligible studies of adolescents aged 10-24 years. Screening of eligible studies was expedited with the artificial intelligence software 'Living Knowledge System.'

Results: 15,321 studies were identified, of which 763 full-text articles were manually screened and 183 included in the review. Of the included studies ~60% included only two measurement points, and 40% included $\geq$ three measurement points between 10-24 years old. Of the 40% that had >three measurement points ~5 key cohorts were used. These cohorts were subject to a number of limitations: adolescents during the 1980's-90's, accelerated longitudinal designs, retrospective reporting, and limited inclusion of over three measurement points (study waves). Although common conceptualisations of course of CMD included "recurrence", "relapse" and "persistence", there was distinct heterogeneity in methodology and understanding of these indices, and little consistency in measurement approaches.

Conclusions: There is no consensus in the literature on observational population-based cohort studies about how to define the course of CMD across adolescence. As most cohorts had few measurement waves, these studies provide little granularity in describing the course of CMD in adolescence.

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