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Trends in mental health diagnosis and use of resources in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic
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Background:
The European Population Health Information Research Infraestructure (PHIRI) conducted research through use cases of applicability for public health policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this study is to present changes in diagnosis of depression or anxiety and the use of health services before and during the COVID-19 crisis.
Methods:
Aggregated datasets with the total number of diagnosis of depression or anxiety (ICD10: F30-F39 and F40-F48 codes) and the number of visits to primary care, hospital or emergency department were generated were generated. Diagnoses were obtained from electronic health records in Austria, Estonia, Finland, Croatia, Latvia, Romania and Aragon (Spain), using the PHIRI federated research infrastructure. Incident trends were depicted by month and year of visit (2017 and 2020).
Results:
Overall, 1,514,311 diagnoses of depression or anxiety were reported in 2017 vs. 1,102,468 diagnoses in 2020. By countries, monthly mean diagnosis of depression or anxiety ranged 2.7/10000 population (standard deviation, SD:0.2) to 148.4(20.0) for 2017; after lockdown in 2020 incidence decreased in most countries. Visits to primary, specialized care and emergency related to anxiety and depression diagnoses dropped after lockdown but they increased in general in all countries during 2021.
Conclusions:
Despite differences in the European health systems, a slight impact on COVID-19 on mental health diagnoses could be detected. This study highlights the potential use of harmonized data for providing evidence for future pandemic preparedness.
Key messages:
- The use of a federated research infrastructure has allowed assessing the impact of COVID-19 in mental health across European countries in a harmonized way.
- Slight changes in mental health diagnoses and use of resources could be detected in several European countries due to COVID-19 pandemic.