



Respiratory diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, depressive symptoms and diabetes:

New data from the RKI published in Journal of Health Monitoring 3/2017

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Respiratory diseases are major causes of disease burden and mortality. They are also the focus of the latest issue of the Journal of Health Monitoring, which features a Focus article that considers acute respiratory diseases such as influenza as well as chronic lung diseases including lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma. In addition, the Journal also contains Fact sheets on asthma and COPD describing the latest findings from the 'German Health Update' study (GEDA 2014/2015). Lothar H. Wieler, president of the Robert Koch Institute, emphasises that 'Influenza and acute respiratory infections, asthma and COPD are common chronic diseases that have high social and economic relevance. COPD is also one of the leading causes of death in Germany and worldwide'.

Wieler also argues that 'Continuous monitoring of prevalence and mortality rates is crucial for public health'. The RKI, an associate member of the German Center for Lung Research, has therefore made an interdepartmental commitment to address the issue of respiratory disease. Analysing a wide range of data, the current Focus article presents time trends in incidence and mortality of respiratory diseases of high public health relevance in Germany. Trends in acute respiratory infections, for example, are characterised by strong seasonal fluctuations. The highest rate recorded over the past years was reached during the 2012/2013 influenza outbreak: at its peak, 2.6% of the population visited a doctor every week due to an acute respiratory infection.

The Journal's current issue also focuses on musculoskeletal conditions. RKI authors present results on osteoarthritis, osteoporosis and joint pain: 29% of women and 24% of men reported acute joint pain during the past 24 hours. Throughout the world, joint symptoms and pain belong to the most common diseases. They affect people in their everyday lives and can lead to loss of quality of life. In Germany, about 22% of women and 14% of men suffered from osteoarthritis during the past twelve months, whereas 8% of women and 2% of men reported having suffered from osteoporosis during the past twelve months.

The Journal also includes a Fact sheet on depressive symptoms which are associated with reduced quality of life, increased morbidity and mortality, as well as increased utilisation of health services. The surveyed prevalence of 10.1% indicates the widespread occurrence of depressive symptoms, regardless of an actual clinical diagnosis of depression. Additional articles concentrate on accidental injuries and limitations to usual activities due to health problems.

The Journal's second Focus article covers diabetes mellitus. A broad literature review was undertaken to analyse the population-related data collected over recent decades in order to assess the frequency (prevalence), the rate of new cases of disease (incidence) and the death rate (mortality) associated with diabetes in Germany. Finally, the RKI is currently establishing a National Diabetes Surveillance System.

Further information: www.rki.de/journalhealthmonitoring-en

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