

Article: 1954

Topic: EPV46 - e-Poster 46: Promotion of Mental Health

The Association Between Weight and Mental Health in a Sampled Maltese Population

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Introduction: The intricate connection between the mind and the body is reflected in the complex relationship between mental and physical health. Previous studies have shown that there may be a link between obesity and poor mental health, with depression in particular. This is more of a concern in Malta since the mean population body mass index (BMI) lies on the upper end of the spectrum.

Objectives: To examine the association between mental health and obesity in a sampled Maltese population.

Aims: To screen for mental health problems and determine the prevalence of somatoform, depression, anxiety, eating disorders and alcohol labuse in various categories of BMI.

Methods: A random sample of Maltese people were recruited from various settings including health centres and the general hospital. A questionnaire was carried out for participants who agreed to participate. Their BMI and several risk factors for physical comorbidities were recorded. The 'PatientHealth Questionnaire' was then used to screen for the mental health conditions listed in the aims section.

Results: Preliminary results indicate that an increasing BMI is linked to a poorer mental health.

Conclusion: The association between poor mental health andobesity in the sampled Maltese population is of concern since Malta is one ofthe leading countries with the highest prevalence of obesity. Better mental health may be promoted by targeting to achieve a healthier BMI in the local population.