

83rd INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA: PUBLIC, MENTAL HEALTH, AND EPIDEMIOLOGY

On 25 April 2025, the University of Latvia in Rīga is hosting the International Scientific Conference on Medicine organised within the frame of the 83rd International Scientific Conference of the University of Latvia (see for details: Leja, M., Stonāns, I. 83rd International Scientific Conference on Medicine and Health Sciences of the University of Latvia: Basic Medical Sciences and Pharmacy, p. 19, this issue).

This section “Public, Mental Health, and Epidemiology” presents a diverse collection of abstracts reflecting ongoing interdisciplinary efforts to address complex healthcare challenges across public health, clinical medicine, psychosocial studies, and healthcare ethics. The research included draws on contexts from Latvia, Lithuania, and Kazakhstan, illustrating a robust commitment to evidence-based practice and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

In the domain of epidemiology and preventive medicine, the abstracts provide insights into disease prevalence and public health strategy implications. Studies include comprehensive analyses of prostate and tonsillar disease incidence trends in Kazakhstan, supplemented by focused research on prostate cancer screening practices within Latvian primary healthcare. Investigations into iron deficiency anaemia among children identify notable deficiencies in parental awareness, indicating a need for intensified public health education. Additionally, research exploring attitudes toward vaccination and organ donation offers valuable perspectives on behavioural and sociocultural determinants influencing healthcare decisions.

Within the allergy and immunology cluster, submitted studies evaluate sensitisation trends to respiratory and food allergens, particularly highlighting emerging concerns related to insect-derived protein allergens. These findings have direct clinical implications for allergology and underscore the importance of evolving regulatory frameworks to protect public health.

Mental health and psychosocial well-being constitute a substantial portion of the abstracts, addressing critical psychological aspects linked to chronic disease management, therapy adherence, and interpersonal behaviours. Topics include the prevalence and risk factors of depressive disorders among chronically ill patients, factors contributing to psychotherapy dropout rates, and relationships between loneliness, narcissism, and addictive behaviours. Research addresses also adolescent mental health issues, examining correlations between psychoactive substance use and depressive symptoms, and the psychological impacts of sustained exposure to war-related media content. Methodological innovations are presented in suicide risk assessment, employing culturally adapted frameworks like the UK Biobank model, highlighting the importance of context-specific validation.

Clinical care quality and patient rights form another essential thematic area. Medication adherence among multimorbid patients is another critical topic explored. Factors influencing adherence are analysed to inform interventions that improve patient outcomes in complex healthcare scenarios. Abstracts also examine aggression management in dementia care, highlighting the effectiveness of targeted nursing education and person-centred approaches to care. Ethical and legal considerations in healthcare are explored through analyses of fatal delirium cases and reviews of systemic barriers in implementing and respecting patient rights across healthcare settings.

Taken together this section emphasises the interconnectedness of clinical insights, psychosocial factors, and public health analyses. It demonstrates the importance of integrating biomedical, psychological, social, and ethical dimensions in shaping health practices and policies, ultimately leading to a more responsive, equitable, and effective health system.

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which were studied the prevalence of mental disorders and suicidal behaviour in Latvia, thoughts of suicide, self-harm and suicidal behaviour were found in 10.6% of respondents [2].

Aim. To assess the prevalence of self-harm-related hospitalisations in 2014 and 2024 at Hospital “Ģintermuiža”. To compare demographic data from 2014 to 2024.

Methods. Retrospective study of all patients admitted to hospital in 2014 and 2024 due to self-harm in “Ģintermuiža”. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis.

Results. The number of hospitalisations related to self-harm has not changed significantly over the last decade, in 2014 they were 2% of all hospitalisations (79 patients), in 2024 they were 2.4% (77 patients). There is a decrease in the average age, in 2014 it was 35.1 (SD 18.4–51.8), where the youngest patient was 15 years old, and in 2024 it was 34.7 years (SD 13.9–55.5), where the youngest patient was 11

years old. Noticeable changes in the gender distribution, as in 2014 50.6% of hospitalised patients were men, then in 2024 men will be only 35.1%, and women 64.9%.

Conclusion. Self-harm plays an important role among hospitalised patients. Over time, there have been significant demographic changes among hospitalised patients. The gender distribution is changing, in 2024 more women than men are hospitalised due to self-harm, and the average age is also reduced. In 2024 20 minors were hospitalised due to self-harm. Although the number of suicides in Latvia decreases over time, the number of hospitalised cases related to suicide attempts over time does not change.

References

1. Suicides. Center for Disease Prevention and Control. 2024. <https://www.spkc.gov.lv/lv/pasnavibas> (viewed 15.10.2024).
2. Kīvīte-Urtāne, A., Rancāns, E., Vinogradova, V. V., Kursīte, M., Libora, I. *Research on the prevalence of mental disorders and suicidal behavior in Latvia*. Research report. LR Ministry of Health, Riga, 2023.

NURSING STUDENTS' INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

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Background. Dementia is a syndrome caused by a brain disease, usually chronic and progressive, in which many of the higher functions of the cerebral cortex are impaired: memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, numeracy, learning, language, and reasoning. It has been found that most family members of dementia patients experience severe emotional stress.

Aim. To analyse the individual experiences of prospective nurses with sick patients.

Methods. The study took place between October and November 2024. The participants were 10 undergraduate general nursing students. Data collection: essay writing. The analysis results were divided into the following groups: 1) the most frequent symptoms in dementia patients and 2) the challenges faced in caring for a person with dementia. The analysis of the data was a qualitative thematic content analysis. The data are presented ethically, and informants are assigned codes (student 1 – S1, student 2 – S2, student 3 – S3, etc.).

Results. Dementia is characterised by memory impairment: “She would forget people’s names and what she had done an hour or two before (S1), “(...) Sometimes, she repeats the same actions several times; one of her favourites is washing her face” (S3), “(...) that people with dementia of-

ten lose the ability not only to carry out everyday tasks but also to communicate and recognize people close to them” (S9). The study revealed that another symptom of dementia is aggressive behaviour: “(...) she became restless, did not understand where she was, what was going on around her, and was unable to carry out daily tasks” (S3). Five informants identified dementia patients as having impaired orientation in time and space: “(...) sometimes got lost in the area where they lived, could not find their home and were disoriented” (S1), “Such patients often live in a reality of their own making, they forget their age, forget the principles of safety, and are unable to assess the dangers of the environment” (S4), “She was like a flashback to her childhood, often talking about her parents and brothers, who are no longer alive” (S5). The most common problems she encountered were the lack of knowledge about dementia care (S1, S2) and the desperation of relatives in caring for a person with dementia (S3, S5, S6).

Conclusion. Dementia is characterised by impaired memory, aggressive behaviour, and impaired orientation in time and space. The most common challenges faced by relatives were lack of knowledge about care and distress among relatives.

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