

Duration of inability to work in depression patients treated in general or psychiatric practices

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Background

- DAK (German Employees' Health Insurance Fund) data have shown that the duration of inability to work (ITW) in patients with mental disorders has increased threefold in the last 20 years.
- The greatest number of absent days by far were caused by depression (ICD-10: F32, F33).
- As with all psychiatric diagnoses, the share of ITW cases is significantly lower than the share of ITW days, i.e. these are mostly long-term illnesses. To date, sick leave due to depression has rarely been examined at the level of individual medical practices.

Research questions

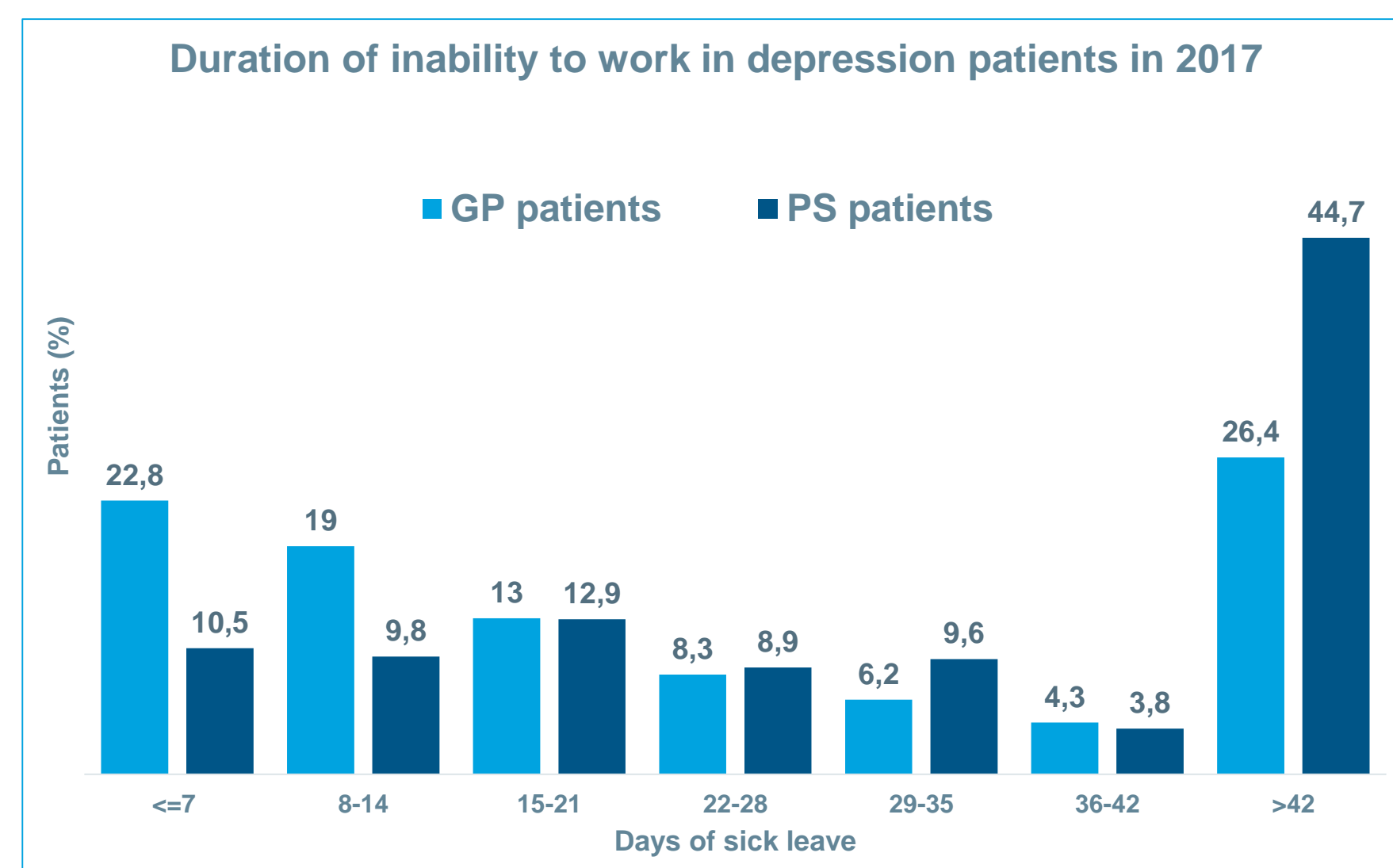
- How long does sick leave last for a patient with depression in Germany?
- What are the differences between patients in general practices and specialized practices in this regard?
- Which demographic factors influence the duration?

Methods

- Patients between the ages of 25 and 60 years with a depression diagnosis (F32.0-F32.3, F33.0-F33.3) and a sick note from a general practitioner (GP) or psychiatrist (PS) in 2017 were selected from the Disease Analyzer database (IQVIA)^{1,2}.

Results

- The average age of GP patients was 42 years (SD: 11) and 59% of them were female; PS patients were 44 years (SD: 11) old on average and 58% were female.
- The average sick leave duration was 54 days (SD: 88) in GP patients and 100 days (SD: 121) in PS patients. The median was significantly lower (18 vs. 33 days).
- In total, 26% of GP patients and 45% of PS patients were unable to work for more than 42 days.



- The risk of a long sick leave increased significantly with age; sex had only a minor effect. Patients with documented workplace problems were on sick leave for more than 42 days significantly more often.

Association between defined variables and the risk of being on sick leave for more than 42 days

Variable	OR (95% CI)	P-value
Age 31-40 (reference: <30)	1.22 (1.15-1.30)	<0.001
Age 41-50 (reference: <30)	1.53 (1.44-1.63)	<0.001
Age 51-60 (reference: <30)	1.87 (1.76-1.98)	<0.001
Women (reference: men)	1.07 (1.03-1.11)	<0.001
Workplace problems (reference: no workplace problems)	1.45 (1.34-1.57)	<0.001
Psychiatrists (reference: general practitioners)	2.19 (2.08-2.31)	<0.001

Conclusions

- The median total duration of the sick leave was calculated and evaluated according to sex and age groups.
- The influence of the demographic variables on the risk of a long sick leave (>42 days) was determined using multivariate logistic regression.

Sources

1- Rathmann W, Bongaerts B, Carius HJ, Kruppert Y, Kostev K. Basic Characteristics and Representativeness of the German Disease Analyzer Database. Int J Clin Pharmacol Ther. 2018 Oct;56(10):459-466
2- Dombrowski S, Kostev K. Use of Electronic Medical Records in the Epidemiological Research. Göttingen: Cuvillier Verlag 2017. ISBN 978-3-736995-00-0

- Depression is usually chronic and involves a high level of suffering. Older patients and patients with workplace problems, in particular, were unable to work for longer periods.

- In addition to workplace prevention measures, the involvement of GP and PS in private practice in the rehabilitation process should be considered more strongly both organizationally and scientifically.