Health and health care monitoring in a period of considerable social change: surveys of a Swedish population during the 1990s

Mikael Rahmqvist

Abstract

This thesis is based on four studies. The first study deals with the prevalence trend of psychological distress during 1989-1995 among a population of 20-39 year-olds. Performed in 1991-1999 the second study describes the time trend for overweight and obesity and the prevalence of psychological distress and pain and also provides figures on medicine consumption in different weight groups. In the third study in 1991-1995 the objective was to compare the proportion of patients who were given a doctor's advice about exercise and/or eating habits, both over time and between primary and hospital health care. In the fourth study patient satisfaction was analysed and one aim was to test a model for less biased comparisons of patient satisfaction between medical specialties.

During the period 1989 to 1995 psychological distress increased significant in the population under study. When the employed group were tested separately, the increasing trends of reported distress remained statistically significant. There was a significant increase in overweight and obesity in the studied population during the period 1991-1999. The increase was especially large among young men and women 25-44 years old, in which groups the prevalence of obesity doubled during the period under discussion. Overweight and obese subjects generally reported more pain combined with greater medicine consumption. Overweight and obese women reported more psychological distress including sleeping problems than did normal-weight women. The proportion of patients who received a doctor's advice about exercise and/or eating habits increased significantly in hospital health care during the period 1991-1995, while that of patients in primary health care remained unchanged. Overweight male patients received more advice than overweight female patients did and this difference could not be explained by either lifestyle factors or perceived health. The patient's age followed closely by the experience of anguish during the hospital stay were most significantly related to patient satisfaction. The results of patient scoring on the patient satisfaction index (PSI) for some medical specialties changed significantly when adjusted for age and health status.

The results of these studies indicate how regularly performed sample surveys can be used as a method to detect changes in the population health and the health care system performance.