

Oral presentation

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The involuntary psychiatric treatment and child welfare placements in Finland 1996–2003: a nationwide register study

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Background

Emotional and behavioral problems are common in young people and mental health problems are frequently intertwined with social problems. Both involuntary psychiatric treatment and taking into care may be used in order to manage youth behavioral problems. Compulsory interventions always endanger violating basic civil rights and therefore careful monitoring of them is warranted. The objective of this study was to evaluate trends in Finland in involuntary psychiatric inpatient treatment and taking into care 12 – 17-year-old adolescents from the year 1996 to the year 2003.

Methods

A nationally representative retrospective register study of the period 1996 – 2003 using the hospital discharge register and child welfare register in Finland.

Results

The results showed that both types of compulsory interventions increased vastly during the study period. The numbers of involuntary psychiatric treatment periods and child welfare placements of adolescents varied considerably in relation to each other, and across different regions of the country.

Conclusion

As there is no evidence of a vast increase in mental disorders or serious behavioral problems in young people,

there is an obvious need for further research on reasons of the significant increase in the use of coercion and for the wide regional variation. Possible explanations discussed are different service structures and treatment cultures.