

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-001

OUTCOME 0: Whole of portfolio

Topic: REPORTING OF PERVASIVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Humphries asked:

The AIHW recently published its report "Comorbidity of mental disorders and physical conditions, 2007". The report omits any mention of pervasive developmental disorders (PDD), including Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, etc.

- a) Why were PDD omitted from the report? Are the diagnostic criteria for PDD described in the Diagnostic Manual For Mental Disorders, 4th edition? Does the Government recognise that the diagnostic criteria for PDD are included in the manual for diagnosing "mental disorders"?
- b) What are the most prevalent "mental disorders" in Australian children up to when they leave school? Can you break this down by age or (5 or 6 year) age band?
- c) If the Government does not regard PDD as "mental disorders", then what category does it put PDD in? Please say who decides the category and how they justify this classification.
- d) When will the AIHW report on the comorbidity of "physical conditions" with a category that includes PDD?

Answer:

- a) The data source for the report *Comorbidity of mental disorders and physical conditions, 2007* was the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2007 Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (SMHWB). The in-scope population for this survey was Australians aged 16–85 living in households. Using data from the ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, the most prevalent age groups for pervasive development disorders are 5–9 and 10–14, at 1.4 per cent and 1.3 per cent of the population, respectively. For the age group in scope for the SMHWB, the prevalence drops to 0.7 per cent and below, effectively precluding any analysis of pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) because of the small numbers captured in the sample frame.

The diagnostic criteria for pervasive development disorders (also known as autism spectrum disorders) are in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV)*.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) recognises that the DSM-IV provides the diagnostic criteria, and that DSM-IV diagnostic criteria were applied in processing responses in the SMHWB.

- b) The most recent data on mental health prevalence for young Australians are drawn from the child and youth component of the 1997 SMHWB, conducted in 1998. From this survey, the prevalence of mental health problems is obtained from the scales of the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) completed by parents. The CBCL scales identify mental health problems in eight specific areas listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Prevalence of mental health problems, children aged 4–17 years, 1998

CBCL area	4–12		13–17		All
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Somatic complaints	7.2	5.6	10.6	6.8	7.3
Delinquent behaviour	7.4	7.8	6.4	5.9	7.1
Attention problems	7.4	6.2	4.8	4.6	6.1
Aggressive behaviour	5.9	5.2	5.0	4.0	5.2
Social problems	6.5	3.9	3.8	3.0	4.6
Withdrawn	5.4	2.9	4.8	4.2	4.3
Anxious/depressed	4.1	2.9	3.6	3.6	3.5
Thought problems	3.2	2.7	3.4	3.1	3.1
Any mental health problem	15.0	14.4	13.4	12.8	14.1

Parents of children and adolescents aged 6–17 years were also administered the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children (Version IV) to identify the prevalence of Depressive disorder, Conduct disorder, and Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The Diagnostic Interview Schedule uses DSM-IV criteria to identify these disorders. No other disorders were assessed in the survey. Prevalence estimates for these disorders are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Prevalence of selected mental health disorders, children aged 6–17 years, 1998

Disorder	6–12		13–17		All
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Depressive disorder	3.7	2.1	4.8	4.9	3.7
Conduct disorder	4.8	1.9	3.8	1.0	3.0
ADHD	19.3	8.8	10.0	3.8	11.2

- c) The DSM-IV, by definition, includes PDD as a ‘mental’ disorder, and the International Classification of Diseases, 10th revision (ICD-10), includes PDD under the general heading of ‘Mental and behavioural disorders’, and under the specific heading of ‘Disorders of psychological development’.

The AIHW notes that the 5th version of the DSM, currently being developed, is proposing to group autism spectrum disorders under the heading 'Neurodevelopment disorders' (note that the term 'pervasive development disorders' is no longer proposed for use). Similarly, the 11th revision of the ICD, also in development, is proposing to group autism spectrum disorders under the heading 'Neurodevelopmental disorders'.

Both the DSM and ICD revision processes are informed by international panels of clinicians and researchers, and several rounds of consultation. In the case of the ICD, the classification is ultimately endorsed by the World Health Assembly.

- d) The AIHW has no plans to report on the comorbidity of physical conditions with pervasive development disorders.