

Issue 37 January 2021

News

Newsletters

This will be the last newsletter for a little while whilst Amelia is on maternity leave, however, meetings will still continue to take place in March, June, September and December. If you have any feedback or queries in between meetings feel free to contact Megan (megan.pritchard@kcl.ac.uk).

Updates to the CRIS Data Linkages Webpage

We have made some updates to the [CRIS Data Linkages webpage](#), including adding information about new linkage projects and updating the existing drop-downs to make them easier to read. Let us know if you have any thoughts or feedback about the updates or the CRIS pages in general.

Research Spotlight

Preprint Publication: Causes of death in mental health service users during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic: South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust data from March to June 2020, compared with 2015-2019

Robert Stewart, Amelia Jewell, Matthew Broadbent, Ioannis Bakolis and Jayati Das-Munshi

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have wide and unforeseen consequences across health sectors. These include potentially profound effects on mental health and mental health services. Since the initial lockdown began in March 2020 the CRIS team have worked to turn around research activity and focus this on the pandemic and its consequences for people using mental health services. This included a project led by Professor Robert Stewart analysing the causes of death in SLaM service users during the first lockdown period.

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have had a particularly high impact on the health and wellbeing of people with pre-existing mental disorders. This may include higher than expected mortality rates due to severe infections themselves, other comorbidities, or through increased suicide rates during lockdown. However, there has been very little published information to date on causes of death in mental health service users. Therefore, the team set out to examine causes of mortality during the March to June 2020 lockdown period using CRIS data linked to mortality data from the Office for National Statistics. They were able to compare the data for 2020 with data from the same four-month period in the previous 5 years (2015-2019).

The team found that there were 2561 deaths between March and June 2020, compared to an average of 1452 for the same months in 2015 to 2019. This is an excess of 1109. It was found that 708 (64%) of the excess deaths were due to COVID-19 as the underlying cause of death. The remaining excess was accounted for by unnatural/unexplained deaths and by deaths recorded as being due to neurodegenerative conditions such as dementia. The team found no excess deaths attributed to cancer, circulatory disorders, digestive disorders, respiratory disorders, or other disease codes during the four-month period.

Professor Rob Stewart had the follow to say about the findings:

“We think that this information from SLaM may be unique for England for some time to come, because we don’t believe there are any other Mental Health Trusts with this data currently available.

As well as the COVID-19 related deaths which accounted for 64% of the overall excess in 2020, there are clearly concerns around the higher deaths attributed to dementia and the large number of unexplained deaths currently awaiting coroner inquests, which will include those due to suicide. No excess was seen in deaths due to physical illnesses like cardiovascular disease or cancer, but we’re only looking at the four months around the first wave of the pandemic here, and we don’t know what the longer-term consequences will be.”

This article is a preprint, preprint publications are research papers that have not been peer-reviewed or accepted by traditional academic journals. The benefits of pre-prints are that study information and data can be made publically available in a shorter timeframe however findings and conclusions have not been reviewed by other independent scientists as they would in a post-print published journal paper. If you would like to read the article in full, it is available [here](#), or to see other CRIS preprints in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, see [here](#).

Upcoming

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday 18th March**, from **4-6pm**. The meeting will be held virtually via Zoom and we will send out the details nearer the time.

More Information

If you would like more information about something mentioned in a newsletter, you can contact us via email: amelia.jewell@slam.nhs.uk / megan.pritchard@kcl.ac.uk.