

PHYSICAL HEALTH INDICATORS IN PATIENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS: GOLD COAST GENERAL PRACTICE DATA

Collaboration between Bond University and GCPHN
Group research project by Bond Business School students (Applied Data Analytics Project), 2023

Background

Mental and physical health are closely linked yet often managed separately in primary care. People with mental health conditions experience higher rates of smoking, harmful alcohol use, and obesity, increasing their risk of preventable physical health complications. Given the high prevalence of mental health disorders in Australia, routine and accurate recording of indicators of physical health in general practice is essential for effective assessment, risk stratification, and targeted intervention.

Aims

- 1) Examine smoking status, alcohol use, and Body Mass Index (BMI) recording in general practice for people with mental health conditions
- 2) Identify patient/clinical factors associated with recording variance

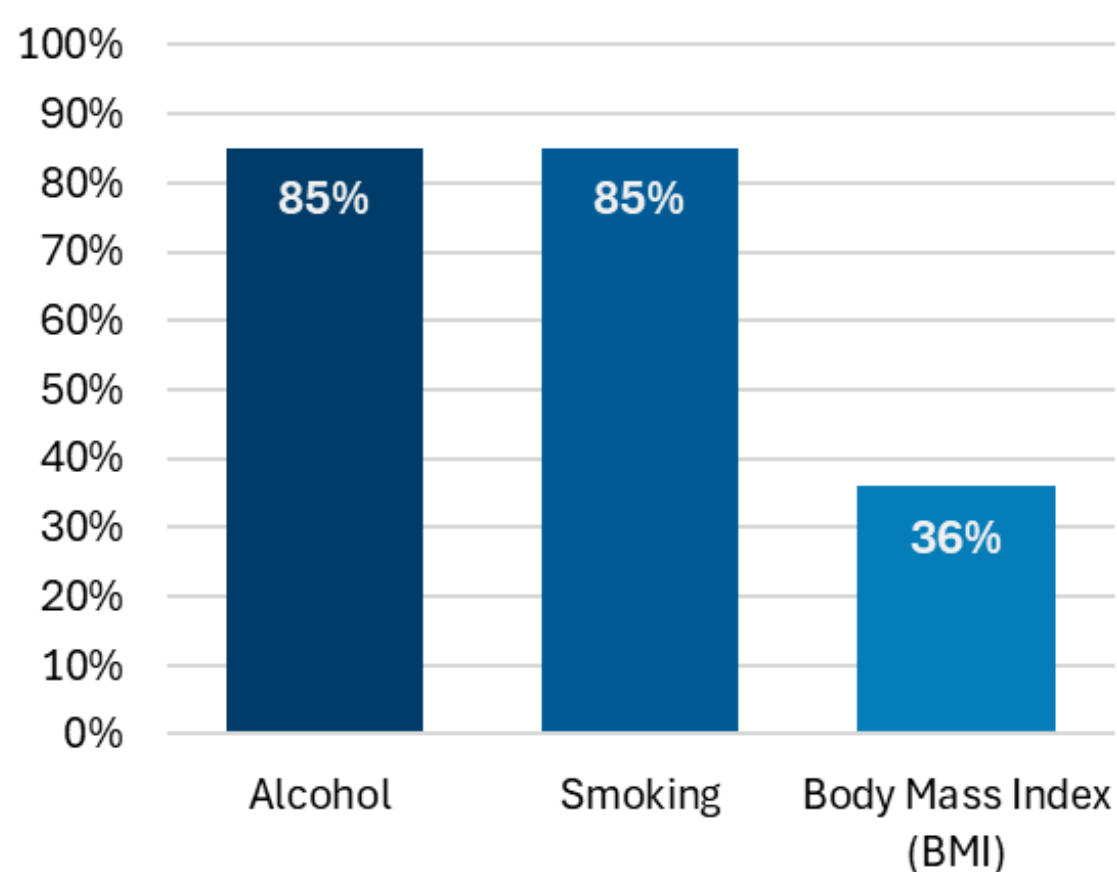
Methods

- Data:** Primary Sense data from 160 Gold Coast general practices
- Population:** Patients with current mental health diagnosis
- Comparison group:** Patients with no mental health diagnosis
- Physical health indicators:** Smoking status, alcohol use & BMI

Key Results

Overall recording rates

- Smoking and alcohol status were recorded in over 80% of patients with mental health diagnosis.
- BMI recording was low (36.0%), representing the largest documentation gap.



Age and gender patterns

- Recording rates increased after age 30
- Slightly higher recording rates for females

Mental health diagnosis matters

- Dementia: high BMI recording
- Anorexia nervosa: very high BMI recording
- Psychological disorders and hyperkinetic disorders: reduced recording across all indicators

Clinical complexity

- Higher complexity scores were associated with increased recording of smoking and alcohol
- Higher complexity linked to lower BMI recording

Conclusions

Physical health indicators are not recorded uniformly for people with mental health conditions. Improving this documentation can support earlier intervention and better long-term outcomes.