

Lunsky, Y., Bradley, E., Gracey, C., Durbin, J., & Koegl, C. (2009). Gender differences in psychiatric diagnoses among inpatients with and without intellectual disabilities. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 114 (1), 52-60.

It is important to explore gender as a variable in psychiatric service provision, as gender based needs may not be adequately addressed. Until now gender differences in inpatient hospital psychiatric services for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) have been largely unknown. This study sought to examine the gender differences in psychiatric diagnoses and clinical characteristics of both men and women with and without intellectual disabilities using a provincial clinical dataset containing clinical profile information on 1,971 individuals.

Key Findings:

Intellectual Disability Group

1. Women were 2.11 times more likely to have a mood disorder diagnosis, and only 0.27 times more likely to have a substance abuse disorder diagnosis.
2. Women were only 0.37 times as likely to have legal issues and 0.51 times as likely to have set fires or destroyed property.
3. Women were 2.73 times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse.
4. Gender differences were not observed with respect to age, other psychiatric diagnoses, co-morbid medical conditions, grief issues, eating disorder diagnosis, or history of suicide attempts.

Non-Intellectual Disability Control Group

1. Women were significantly older than males.
2. Women were only 0.35 times as likely to have a substance abuse diagnosis, 0.74 times as likely to have an organic disorder diagnosis and 0.66 times as likely to have a psychotic disorder diagnosis. Women were also 2.05 times more likely to have a diagnosis of a mood disorder diagnosis and 1.68 times as likely to have an anxiety disorder diagnosis.
3. Women were 0.24 times as likely to have legal problems, 2.17 times more likely to have loss/grief issues, and 2.10 times more likely to have a history of suicide attempts than males without ID.
4. Women were almost 3 times more likely to have a diagnosis of eating disorder and almost 5 times more likely to have a history of sexual abuse than males.

This study considered gender, intellectual disability, and mental health in an inpatient hospital population, and demonstrated that gender is a relevant variable to consider when caring for psychiatric patients with and without intellectual disabilities. This study demonstrated that gender differences were similar overall across the two populations, and the authors suggested that it would be important to consider more gender sensitive inpatient services for the ID population.