

H-CARDD snapshot



Prevalence of adult Ontarians with developmental disabilities higher than expected

What is this research about?

Adult Ontarians with developmental disabilities are highly vulnerable to physical and mental health problems. They often don't get the health care they need. It's important, then, to understand as much as possible about this group, including its health needs. A better understanding can lead to effective and efficient healthcare planning.

Previous policy and planning decisions, however, have been based on information from other jurisdictions or on small, specialized samples from Ontario. This is a problem since other jurisdictions differ from the province in important ways, and small samples often provide an incomplete picture.

What did the researchers do?

The Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities (H-CARDD) Program used a large dataset to describe adult Ontarians, age 18 to 64, with developmental disabilities between April 2009 and March 2011. H-CARDD compared those with developmental disabilities to those without, in terms of: age, sex, residence (urban or rural), health region (Local Health Integration Network), neighbourhood income, and health status.

What you need to know

The H-CARDD Program's *Atlas on the Primary Care of Adults with Developmental Disabilities in Ontario*, describes a cohort of 66,484 individuals with developmental disabilities—representing a prevalence rate of 0.78%. Policy and planning efforts should focus on those living in the poorest neighborhoods and those with higher rates of diseases.

What did the researchers find?

H-CARDD identified a cohort of 66,484 adults with development disabilities in Ontario. This corresponds to a prevalence rate of 0.78% - a finding that is somewhat higher than the previously used rate of 0.5%. Compared to adults without developmental disabilities, cohort members were younger. Also, a greater proportion was male and more likely to live in poorer neighborhoods and rural areas. They also were more ill overall and were more likely to be diagnosed with a range of chronic diseases.

How can you use this research?

Knowing how common developmental disabilities are in adulthood can inform system planning. Certain groups may need particular attention, such as those living in poorer neighbourhoods or those who have additional mental or physical health problems. Policy and planning activities are important province-wide. However, there may need to be some work done to understand why certain regions have prevalence estimates that are either much higher or lower than the provincial average.

About the researchers

This Research Snapshot is based on the second chapter of H-CARDD's new resource *The Atlas on the Primary Care of Adults with Developmental Disabilities in Ontario*. The chapter was led by Dr. Elizabeth Lin, an Independent Scientist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), an Associate Professor with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto, and an Adjunct Scientist at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES).

H-CARDD's partners in the creation of this *Atlas* include the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Surrey Place Centre, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, the University of Ottawa and Queen's University, as well as ICES and CAMH.

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About H-CARDD

Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities (H-CARDD) is a research program whose primary goal is to enhance the overall health and well-being of people with developmental disabilities through improved health care policy and services. H-CARDD research is conducted by dedicated teams of scientists, policymakers, and health care providers. H-CARDD is funded by the Partnerships for Health System Improvement Program of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Health Systems Research Fund of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The H-CARDD Snapshot is a modified version of the Research Snapshot template, developed by the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University



Health Care Access Research
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