Outcome of depressive mood disorder among adolescent outpatients in a 8-year follow-up

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Objective. To investigate the 8-year course and outcome of depressive mood disorders and the key outcome predictors among adolescent outpatients across the important transition period into young adulthood.

Materials and methods. Data were drawn from the Adolescent Depression Study (ADS), a Finnish naturalistic clinical follow-up study. Depressive outpatients (N=148, 13-18yrs, 82% females) were assessed at baseline, 6 month, 12 month and 8 years using diagnostic and self-report instruments. Baseline predictors covered sociodemographic, clinical and treatment characteristics. Outcomes were time to recovery, recurrence, time spent ill and longitudinal latent depressive symptom profiles that were based on the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS) scores assessed at each measurement point.

Results. Median length of index episode was 111 weeks (Q1=57, Q3=210 weeks) and time to recovery from baseline 57 weeks (Q1=28, Q3=113 weeks). Recovery rate from a depressive mood disorder was 73% at 2 years, 91% at 5 years and 94% by the end of mean 8-year follow-up. One or more recurrent episodes were presented by 67% of the outpatients. Over half (57%) of subjects spent 25% or more of the 8-year follow-up period as depressed, median time spent ill being 126 weeks (Q1=71, Q3=251 weeks).

Comorbid diagnoses were common at baseline and at the 8-year follow-up (Table 1). At the 8-year follow-up, 36% still had a mood disorder. Latent profile analyses based on HDRS scores suggested a three profile solution. The profile solution along with the significant baseline predictors from multivariate logistic regression analyses are depicted in Figure 1.

Conclusions. While for others the adolescent depression outcome into young adulthood years seems promising, for many episodes are long, even chronic, and recurrences are common. Comorbid psychiatric diagnoses were among the strongest predictors of the more severe and chronic depressive symptom profiles.

Table 1. Psychiatric comorbidity.

Comorbid diagnose	Baseline	8-year
Anxiety disorder	56%	48%
Substance use disorder	13%	10%
Disruptive disorder	10%	1%
Eating disorder	10%	7%
Personality disorders		
Borderline	12%	6%
Other personality do	33%	21%

Figure 1. Latent profiles of HDRS scores at baseline, 6 and 12 months, and at 8-year follow-up.