

Title: Friendship highly associated with health anxiety in a general adult population: The Tromsø study

Anja Davis Norbye

Department of Community Medicine

UiT, The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway

Health anxiety is a condition associated with increased risk of disability, increased health care utilization and reduced quality of life. Although we know some negative consequences of the condition, there is no consensus on which factors are important for the levels of health anxiety. The aim of this descriptive study was to explore the distribution of health anxiety in a general, adult population, and to investigate if demographic and social factors were associated with health anxiety. The study employed a cross-section design in the Tromsø study: Tromsø 7. 21.083 participants age 40-97 gave self-reported information on health anxiety and the sociodemographic variables age, sex, household income and education, whether they were living with a spouse/partner, children under 18 or others over 18, quality of friendship and whether they participated in organised activity. We used Whiteley Index-6 with a 0-4 point Likert Scale to measure health anxiety. Exponential regression was used to explore the statistical significance of associations. The results showed a highly skewed distribution with a mean score of 3.15 out of 24 points. 10 % had ≥7 points and 1 % had ≥14 points. Income was significantly associated with health anxiety. Of the social variables, living with a spouse/partner, children or others over 18 were not significantly related to health anxiety, while quality of friendship and participation in organised activity were highly significant. To our knowledge, this study is the first to explore if social factors are associated with health anxiety.

Biography:

Anja Davis Norbye is a young researcher of 30 years and a PhD student. Norbyes PhD research is based in on data from the health survey *the Tromsø study*. Her background is as a clinical physiotherapist with a Master degree in neurological physiotherapy, working 8 years with patients with severe conditions. Combining clinical work with research, Norbye has published papers relevant for her work; two articles on chronic back pain, one article on how spasticity affects mobility in patients with multiple sclerosis, and now in her PhD theses- exploring health anxiety within the field of psychology.

Presenting author details
Full name: Anja Davis Norbye
Contact number: + 47 77644867
Twitter account: N/A
Linked In account: N/A

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