

Brief communication Σύντομο άρθρο.

Compulsory admissions: Possibly another dark side of the Greek economic crisis

M. Skokou,¹ P. Gouma,² Ph. Gourzis¹

¹Department of Psychiatry, General University Hospital of Patras, School of Medicine, University of Patras, Rio, Patra

²General Hospital of Athens "Gennimatas", National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

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A number of previous articles have dealt with the negative impact of the Greek Economic crisis on public health, including significant increases in major depression prevalence and suicide and homicide rates. The mentally ill seem to represent a vulnerable social group, with particular difficulties in this context. The number of compulsory assessments and involuntary admissions was recorded by reviewing patient records in the Department of Psychiatry of the University Hospital of Patras, through years 2006–2013. Compulsory assessments increased from 176 in 2006 to 262 in 2009 and 354 in 2013, representing a 48.86% and 101.13% increase in the first and the fifth year of economic crisis, respectively. The assessments resulted in 160 involuntary admissions in 2006, which escalated to 262 admissions (63.75% rise) in 2013. Even though a rise in involuntary placements could be attributed to other factors as well, it may also partly represent a not so evident side of the Greek economic crisis.

Key words: Involuntary placement, economic crisis, psychosis, public health.

A number of previous articles have dealt with the negative impact of the Greek economic crisis on public health.^{1–4} Among the reported parameters are increases in suicide and homicide rates, major depression prevalence, new HIV infections,

tuberculosis incidence, malaria reemergence, and neonatal deaths.⁶ It has been accepted that the mentally ill represent a vulnerable social group, because of functional deterioration, increased health needs and stigma, and as such, face partic-

ular difficulties in this context. A rise in compulsory assessments and admissions in our department possibly mirrors, to a certain extent, this strain on the mentally ill population.

The number of compulsory assessments and involuntary admissions was recorded by reviewing patient records in the Department of Psychiatry of the University Hospital of Patras, through years 2006–2013, which, at that time, has been the major inpatient service in an administrative area of about 1.000.000 people. It was found that compulsory assessments increased from 176 in 2006 to 262 in 2009 and 354 in 2013, representing a 48.86% and 101.13% increase in the first and the fifth year of economic crisis, respectively. The assessments resulted in 160 involuntary admissions in 2006, which escalated to 262 admissions (63–75% rise) in 2013. The examined patients were 155 in 2006, 226 in 2009 and almost doubled to 297 in 2013. The patients that were involuntary assessed more than once in the same year, corresponding to the so-called revolving door cases, rose by 137.5%, from 16 to 38, through the same time period. Also, an

exceptional rise by almost six times in 2013 compared to 2006, from 16 to 92, was noted in the number of assessments that did not warrant hospitalization, and were mainly represented by alcohol/substance use (15 assessments, 16.3%), as well as stable or mildly relapsed psychotic and bipolar patients (41 assessments, 44.6%), who could not afford regular health care due to family exhaustion, lack of services, or poverty (fig. 1).

A rise in involuntary placements as a consequence of ongoing deinstitutionalization processes has been previously noted, even in countries with well-organized mental health systems, such as the UK.⁶ Yet, the social and economic stress and the fact that many people in Greece lost health insurance and therefore access to therapy could have contributed to this increase, by increasing morbidity across all diagnostic categories, including psychotic patients, who are mainly represented in involuntary admissions.⁷ This could stand for a not so evident side of the Greek economic crisis.

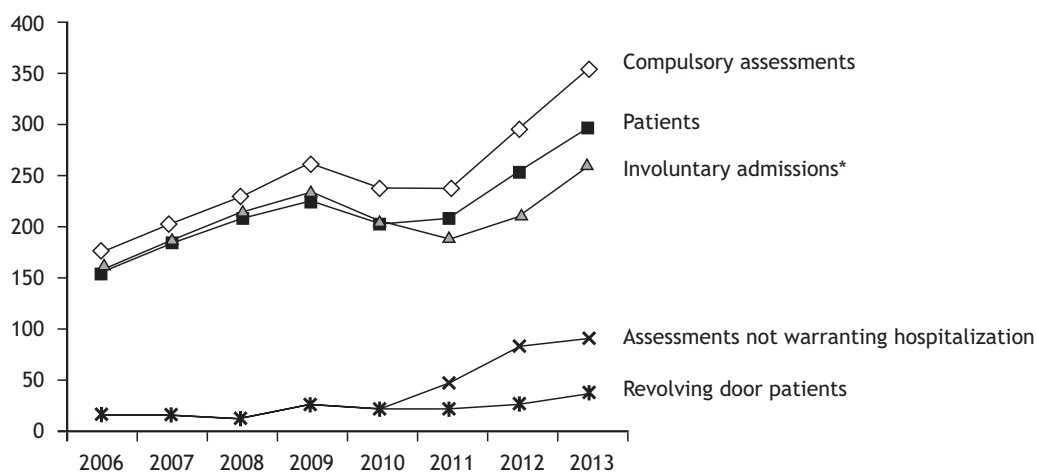


Figure 1. Number of compulsory psychiatric assessments, involuntary examined patients, involuntary admissions*, assessments not resulting in hospitalization, and repeatedly examined patients during the period 2006–2013.

* A percentage of these admissions, 16.9–51.5% each year, were hospitalized in other inpatient services of the country, due to overcrowding of the ward.

Ακούσιες νοσηλείες: Ακόμα μία σκοτεινή πλευρά της Ελληνικής οικονομικής κρίσης

Μ. Σκώκου,¹ Π. Γκούμα,² Φ. Γουρζής¹

¹Πανεπιστημιακή Ψυχιατρική Κλινική ΠΓΝΠ, Ιατρική Σχολή, Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών, Ρίο, Πάτρα,
²Γενικό Νοσοκομείο Αθηνών "Γεννηματάς", Εθνικό Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, Αθήνα

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Σε προηγούμενες εργασίες έχουν επισημανθεί οι αρνητικές συνέπειες της οικονομικής κρίσης για τη δημόσια υγεία, όπως η αύξηση της συχνότητας της κατάθλιψης και του δείκτη αυτοκτονιών και ανθρωποκτονιών. Οι ψυχιατρικοί ασθενείς φαίνεται να αντιπροσωπεύουν μια ευάλωτη ομάδα του γενικού πληθυσμού, με αυξημένη επιβάρυνση στο πλαίσιο της δυσμενούς οικονομικής συγκυρίας. Έγινε καταγραφή του αριθμού των ακούσιων εξετάσεων και νοσηλείων που έλαβαν χώρα στην Ψυχιατρική Κλινική του Πανεπιστημιακού Γενικού Νοσοκομείου Πατρών, κατά τα έτη 2006–2013. Ο αριθμός των ακούσιων εξετάσεων αυξήθηκε από 176 το 2006 σε 262 το 2009, και 354 το 2013, που αντιστοιχεί σε αύξηση κατά 48,86% και 101,13% το πρώτο και το πέμπτο έτος της περιόδου της οικονομικής κρίσης, αντίστοιχα. Οι ακούσιες εξετάσεις κατέληξαν σε 160 ακούσιες νοσηλείες το 2006, και 262 νοσηλείες (αύξηση κατά 63,75%) το 2013. Αν και η αύξηση των ακούσιων νοσηλείων μπορεί να σχετίζεται και με άλλους παράγοντες, το φαινόμενο αυτό μπορεί να αντιπροσωπεύει εν μέρει μια αφανή πλευρά της οικονομικής κρίσης στην Ελλάδα.

Λέξεις ευρετηρίου: Ακούσια νοσηλεία, οικονομική κρίση, ψύχωση, δημόσια υγεία.

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Corresponding author: P. Gourzis, MD, Professor of Psychiatry, Head of the Department of Psychiatry, General University Hospital of Patras, School of Medicine, University of Patras, University Campus, GR-265 04, Rio, Patra, Greece
Tel.: (+30) 2613-60 32 45
e-mail: pgourzis@upatras.gr