

# Mental Health Crisis Impact

The MH Crisis Impact Study was financed by the Public Health Initiatives Programme (PT06), EEA Grants Financial Mechanism 2009-2014. The main goal of the study is to understand the effects of the economic crisis on mental health in Portugal. The study also aims at researching the determinants of mental disorders and use of mental health care services, as well as to propose new policies and assist the development of programmes and interventions aimed at the reduction of health inequalities and mental health problems linked with the economic crisis.

## Preliminary results Qualitative Study

### 2<sup>ND</sup> PHASE OF RESEARCH

The spill-over effects of the economic recession on mental health are difficult to account solely through quantitative measures. Giving voice to users and health professionals is imperative to better understand the economic crisis consequences and plan initiatives to improve responsiveness of services, quality of care, and overall systems efficiency and effectiveness.

Users and health professionals are major stakeholders in care delivery; however, so far qualitative evidence of their experiences during the economic recession is very scarce, and almost non-existent in the mental health field.

### OBJECTIVE

To explore the perceived effects of the economic crisis on mental health and use of health services among primary health care professionals and users.

### METHODS

- Primary health care centres were the settings for data collection. Centres were selected in areas of higher probability of economic recession impact in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.
- Two out of three case studies were conducted so far: a suburban area located in an old industrial metropolitan

axis (Póvoa de Santa Iria UCSP) and a suburban area located in a recent metropolitan expansion axis (São Marcos USF).

- Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

### Participants

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 health professionals (general practitioners, nurses and psychologists).
- 4 focus groups were conducted with 22 primary health care users.

The topics in study were the following:

#### FOCUS GROUPS

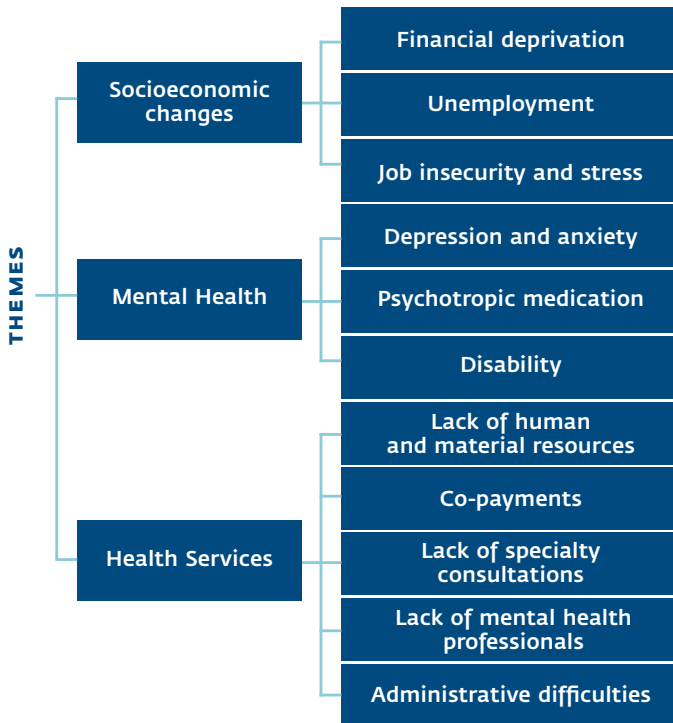
Changes in mental health and wellbeing
Perceived risk factors during the recession
Help-seeking behaviours
Access and quality of health care
Proposed solutions

#### INTERVIEWS

Changes in population's mental health and wellbeing
Perceived risk factors during the recession
Access and quality in provision of health care
Proposed solutions

## PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

All semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted so far were transcribed verbatim, analysed and codified with QSR NVivo 10 Software. Preliminary thematic analysis was performed.



## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Both users and health professionals established an association between the economic crisis and deterioration of mental health.
- The mechanisms identified were mainly through changes in socioeconomic conditions, such as financial deprivation, unemployment and more demanding and insecure jobs.
- Both users and professionals reported the perception of an increase in depression, anxiety and consumption of psychotropic medication.
- Regarding the utilization of services, both users and professionals considered co-payments and the lack of family doctors and mental health professionals the major challenges in provision of care.



## CONCLUSION

This approach will contribute to the current knowledge of the effects of the economic crisis in Portugal on mental health and wellbeing of the population.

The added value of this study lies on its concern with underlying values, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours related to mental health and utilization of services in the specific context of an economic recession.

### NOVA MEDICAL SCHOOL · PROJECT TEAM

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