

Mental health lags behind global health and lifespan improvements

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A leading international expert on autism at the University of Leicester has been involved in contributing to a major new study of global health.

Professor Terry Brugha, of the Department of Health Sciences, is co-author of two papers in *The Lancet's* special issue on the Global Burden of Disease.

Because of his work on [Autism](#) Epidemiology, which was used to develop one new element of these [global data](#) syntheses, Professor Brugha was a co-author at the University of Leicester on two of the reports.

He said: "The most pressing issue to come out of the Global Burden of Disease study is that [global health](#) and lifespan is improving but mental health is not. This fits well with the second theme of my research group which is [mental disorder prevention trials](#)."

In a recent study, Professor Brugha found not a single person identified with autism or asperger's syndrome during a community survey in England actually knew they had the condition.

His research had revealed that autism was commoner in males, those without higher educational qualifications, and those living in social (government financed) housing. Prevalence was not related to the age of those with the condition.

The findings came from the first ever general population survey of autism in adulthood. They were based on a two phase epidemiological survey in England (7,461 screening interviews; 618 diagnostic) carried out in 2007. The findings were published fully in the world's leading peer refereed mental health scientific journal the [Archives of General Psychiatry](#).

Professor Brugha, who is also a consultant psychiatrist working in the NHS with the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, said none of the cases with autism found in the community survey throughout England knew that they were autistic or had received an official diagnosis of autism or asperger syndrome.

Professor Brugha's research confirms the already published report from the survey (2009) that 9.8 per thousand adults in England meet official diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder. There was no evidence of an 'autism epidemic' of marked increase in people with the condition.

Provided by University of Leicester

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