

### OP06.3

#### **Self-reported symptoms and healthcare seeking – results from a population based survey**

*Sandra Elnegaard(1), A Fischer Pedersen(2), R Sand Andersen(2), DE Jarbøl(1)*

*(1) Research Unit of General Practice, University of Southern Denmark, Odense*

*(2) Research Unit for General Practice, Aarhus University*

*Corresponding author: Dr Sandra Elnegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Institute of Public Health, Research Unit of General Practice, Odense C, Denmark. E-mail: selnegaard@health.sdu.dk*

**Background & Aim:** Research has revealed that the decision to consult a doctor for symptoms is based on a variety of factors. Enhanced understanding of the frequency of symptoms and factors associated with help-seeking in the general population would be helpful in order to further understand help-seeking decisions.

**Method:** The study was conducted as a Danish nationwide cohort study including a random sample of 100,000 individuals, aged > 20 years. Data was collected from a web-based questionnaire. A total of 44 different symptoms covering a wide area of different symptoms were selected based on extensive literature search. Further, items regarding characteristics of the symptom (level of interference with daily life, concerns) and contact to the GP were included.

**Results:** A total of 49,706 subjects completed the questionnaire. Prevalence estimates of symptoms reported varied from 49.4% (24,537) reporting tiredness to 0.11% (54) reporting blood in vomit. The proportion of contact to the GP with at least one symptom was 37%. For almost 2/3 of the symptoms reported, no gender differences were found concerning the proportion leading to GP contacts. The overall pattern showed a statistically significant association between increasing concerns for the symptom (OR 3.7, CI[3.6-3.9]), higher level of interference (OR 3.2, CI[3.1-3.3]), higher number of symptoms reported (symptom burden)(OR 2.3 CI[2.1-2.5]) and contacts to GP.

**Conclusions:** The prevalence of symptoms is common in the general population and a significant number of men and women do not seek help when experiencing symptoms. The decision to consult a doctor for symptoms is significantly influenced by symptom burden, level of interference and concern for the symptom. An enhanced understanding of help-seeking decisions may assist healthcare professionals in identifying patients who are at risk of postponing contact to the GP and may help improving health campaigns targeting earlier diagnosis of cancer or in general.