

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Croatian Medical Journal  
Zagreb University School of Medicine  
Šalata 3b  
10000 Zagreb  
Croatia

Phone: ++385-1-4590-254

Fax: ++385-1-4590-222

Mail: [dario.sambunjak@mef.hr](mailto:dario.sambunjak@mef.hr)

All articles published in the Croatian Medical Journal  
are freely available at [www.cmj.hr](http://www.cmj.hr)

### **Unemployed people receive more drug prescriptions**

ZAGREB – Drugs in Croatia are more often prescribed to unemployed than employed people, shows a study published in the new issue of the *Croatian Medical Journal*. The biggest difference in the number of prescribed drugs was found for anxiolytic and antidepressant drugs.

A team of researchers from Split used the data obtained from the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance and found that during 2003, a total of 1 003 547 drugs were prescribed to 949 746 health-insured persons aged 18-69 years. The number of prescriptions per insured individual (NPI) was 32% higher for unemployed (average 1.32) than for employed (average 0.99).

The difference in NPI between employed and unemployed was highest in Zagreb area (0.52), followed by Split (0.21), Rijeka (0.20), and Osijek area (0.12). This seemingly paradoxical finding that the difference is lowest in the region with the highest rate of unemployment (i.e. Osijek), the authors explain by the assumption that unemployed persons are less frustrated when surrounded by people of similar socio-economic status.

The study also found some gender differences in NPI. Generally, more drugs were prescribed to women than to men (1.18 vs. 0.94). This difference was even more pronounced when

comparing only employed women (NPI 1.17) with unemployed men (NPI 0.85). However, unemployed men receive more drugs (NPI 1.42) than unemployed women (NPI 1.24). Commenting on these findings, the authors conclude that women in Croatia cope better with unemployment than men, possibly because men are traditionally expected to bear greater responsibility for the family welfare.

The study explored the prescription prevalence of the leading 102 drug groups, with emphasis on psychotropic (anxiolytics and antidepressants), antidiabetic, antihypertensive, and respiratory drugs. The largest difference in NPI persons was found for psychotropic drugs, which are prescribed more than twice as much to unemployed than to employed patients. The NPI for antidiabetic drugs was also higher for unemployed patients, but employed received more antihypertensive and respiratory drugs.

As a limitation of the study, authors state that their data show the number of prescribed and dispensed rather than actually consumed drugs. Still, the results indicate an association between unemployment and illness, especially mental disturbances. These findings, conclude the authors, could be used for „planning health care policies which would be more people-centered, sensitive to inequalities, unemployment, and social poverty, as well as oriented toward prevention rather than symptomatic treatment.“

**Corresponding author:**

Antonio Dragun

Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar

Poljana Kraljice Jelene 1

21000 Split

Croatia

*antonio.dragun@inet.hr*