

New Study Reveals 317% Higher Likelihood of Anti-Anxiety Medication Use in Israel After October 7th War

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL, October 9, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Findings from a new study by Kahn-Sagol-Maccabi (KSM), the Research and Innovation Center of Maccabi Health Services, a leading Israeli HMO, examining nearly two decades of anonymized medical records of MHS members in Israel, found a significant rise in the use of anti-anxiety medications among Israelis during times of armed conflict, with the most dramatic increase following the October 7th war in 2023. The findings highlight how national crises take a serious toll on mental health, stretching beyond the battlefield to affect citizens.

Using Israel as a case study, researchers explored how national stress and environmental conditions affect individual stress, considering factors such as age, gender, residential location, socioeconomic status, socio-religious background, and previous psychiatric drug use. The study examined coping patterns over the past 19 years, including the events of October 7th, by analyzing purchases of short-term anti-anxiety medication, and particularly benzodiazepines (a common medication for treating anxiety). The study received ethical approval from the Helsinki Committee.

Researchers from KSM analyzed anonymized medical data of over 1.1 million people aged 21 and older from 2006 to 2024. They found that during military operations, people were 28% more likely to buy anti-anxiety medications, and during the Second Lebanon War, this likelihood increased by 44%. After the October 7th war, people were 317% more likely to seek out anxiety-related prescriptions, compared to times of national stability.



Dr. Tal Patalon, Head of KSM Research and Innovation Center. Photo by Ricky Rachman

Women More Affected – The study also found that women were more likely to seek treatment for anxiety both in general and during times of national instability. Female patients were 26% more likely to start anxiety medication during military operations and 81% more likely to do so after the October 7th war, on top of their already higher baseline likelihood of seeking anxiety treatment compared to males.

Mental Health Strain Across Israel - The study revealed that location within Israel generally influenced anxiety treatment patterns. During the Second Lebanon War, residents of northern Israel were more likely to purchase anti-anxiety medications compared to those in central Israel. Interestingly, residents near the Gaza border were generally less likely to seek treatment during most conflicts, despite the high level of direct exposure to attacks. Following the October 7th war, however, anxiety treatment appeared to increase across all regions, signaling that the emotional impact reached beyond specific geographic areas.

"The events of October 7th drastically changed reality for everyone—patients and healthcare providers alike," said Dr. Tal Patalon, head of KSM Research and Innovation Center. "The sharp increase in anxiety medication use underscores the urgent need for targeted mental health interventions during times of conflict. It also highlights the critical role that environmental and national stressors play in influencing individual health and wellbeing." She added that the study emphasizes the value of big data in helping better identify where and when additional resources are needed.

Key Findings:

1. The increased risk of purchasing short-term anxiolytics during military operations is 28% higher compared to periods of relative national stability.
2. During the Second Lebanon War, the increased risk of purchasing anti-anxiety medication rose by 44%.
3. Following the events of October 7th there was an unprecedented 317% increased risk of purchasing anti-anxiety medication.
4. During the Second Lebanon War, residents of northern Israel had an additional 39% increased risk of purchasing anti-anxiety medication than residents of Central Israel.
5. During military operations in the South, there was an additional 18% increased risk in the use of these medications compared to residents of Central Israel at the time.
6. All Israeli residents experienced an increase in medication use during the recent war.

To read the full study (pre-print, yet to be peer-reviewed) [click here](#).

ABOUT KSM

KSM (Kahn-Sagol-Maccabi is the Research and Innovation Center of Maccabi Healthcare Service. It was established in 2016 in cooperation with Morris Kahn and Sami Sagol and is led by Dr. Tal

Patalon. KSM's vision is to reshape the future of healthcare by providing a holistic response to all medical research needs and empowering patients and health professionals. KSM has developed an innovative big data platform allowing researchers worldwide to conduct medical research and predictive analysis using advanced algorithms and an online anonymized database. The Center also includes a clinical research unit and an epidemiology research unit. In addition, the largest sample bank in Israel (BioBank) has been established at KSM. The Center has forged strategic partnerships with leading technology companies, start-ups, academic institutions, and scientists worldwide.

For more information about KSM, please visit: <https://www.ksminnovation.com/>

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