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Nature Is The Best Medicine

Nathan Schweitzer

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Nature Is The Best Medicine

Nathan Schweitzer

Research question and Problem identification

Can interactions with green spaces play a role in treatment for mental health?

Diverse and outside the box methods of treating anxiety and depression that is cost effective or free.

Anxiety and Depression continue to pose a massive cost burden on the health care system without many cost-effective solutions available.

Cost to the system depression and other disorders.

- Depression has a high economic burden shown by multiple studies and systematic reviews
- Systematic review for cost of illness studies of depression found average case annual cost of 1000-2500\$, 2000-3700\$ morbidity cost, 200-400\$ mortality cost.
- Graph shows other mental health conditions not cited in most literature as contributing to cost on the health care system.

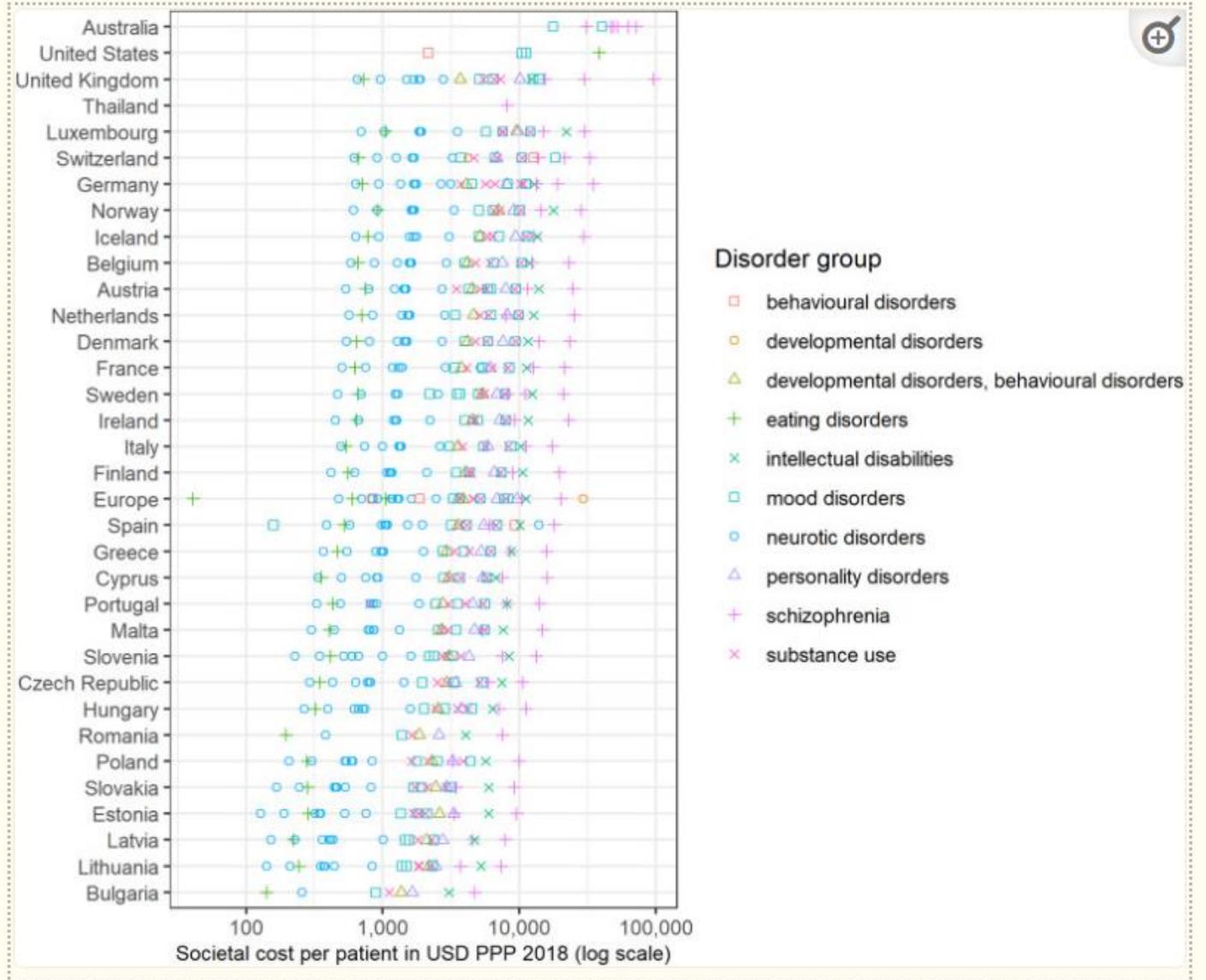
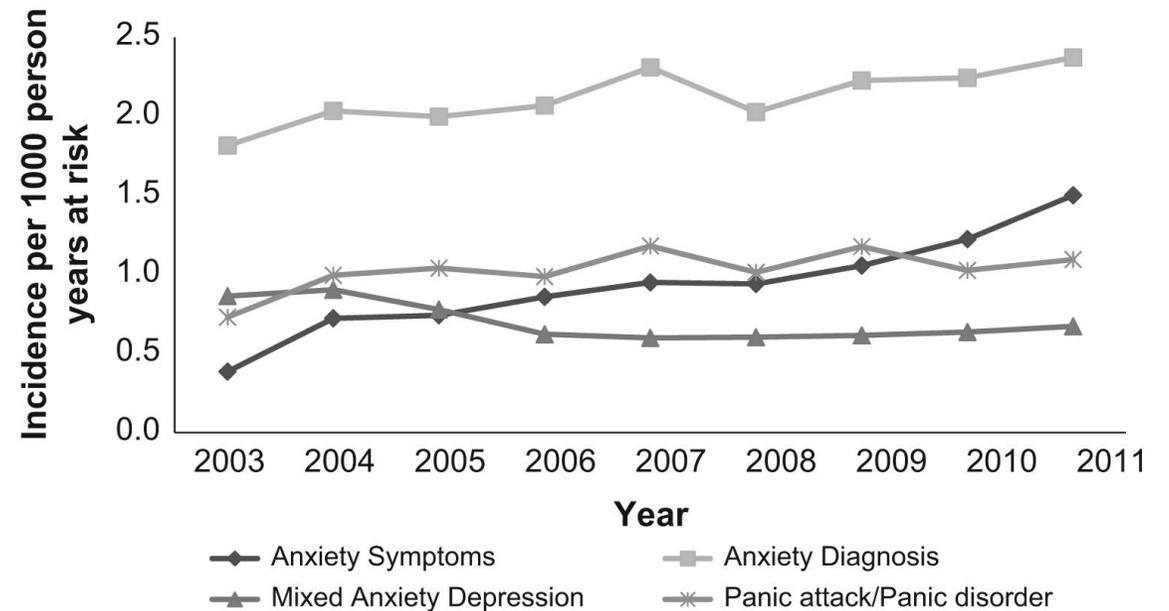
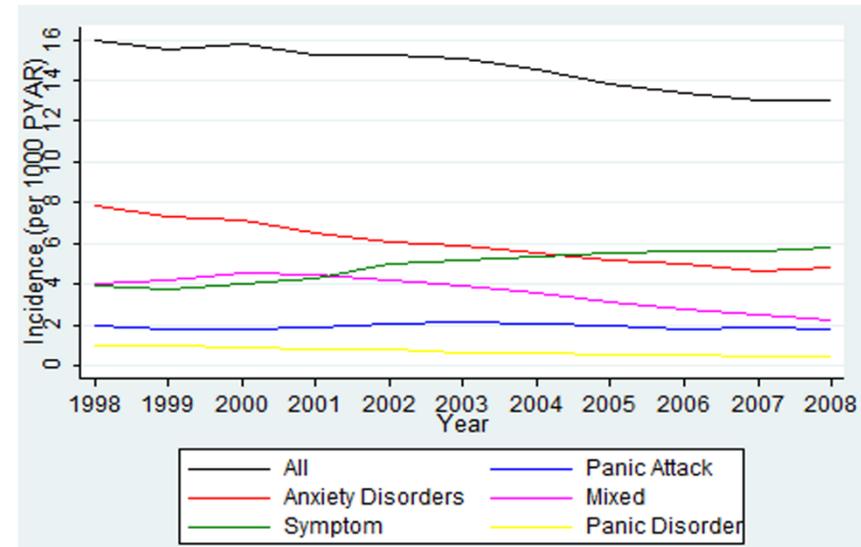


Fig. 2.

Societal cost per patient in US dollars adjusted by country's purchasing power parity and inflation until year 2018 (USD PPP 2018) by disorder group and country, ranked by USD PPP 2018.

Anxiety cost numbers breakdown

- Annual cost of anxiety disorders approximately 42.3 billion in 1990 In the US.
- 1542\$ per sufferer
- 23 billion (54% total cost) in non-psychiatric medical treatment cost
- 13.3 billion (31%) psychiatric treatment costs
- 4,1 billion (10%) in indirect workplace costs
- 1.2 billion (3%) mortality cost
- 0.8 billion (2%) prescription pharmaceutical cost



Can nature help? The studies say yes!

Multiple studies conducted using diverse study methods all point to the overwhelming evidence that increased interactions with green spaces improves multiple aspects of mental health. Including...

- Improves sleep
- Reduction in stress assessed by self report and physiologic biomarkers
- Improves overall cognitive function
- Improved memory and attention
- Improves Impulse inhibition
- Improves Children's school performance
- Increases Imagination and creativity

Quotes from community

“Being in nature is a well documented and evidence-based method to calm the nervous system. It is something I recommend all my patients try to engage in.” Dr. Gabrielle Babai PsyD.

“The idea for the free park program was originally intended by the department of health to promote exercise. We all know the benefits go far beyond that.” David Butsch

“Our group thought that by allowing this to be a prescription from the doctor it would promote more use of the program. We saw numbers go up after this change but still only utilized 700 out of 12,000 issued. We hope more physicians will utilize this program and numbers will continue to increase.” David Butsch

Current programs

- Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports issues FREE park passes to PCP offices to be used as prescriptions and can be redeemed at VT state parks.
- Last year only 700 passes used out of 12,000 issued to medical offices around the state.

R VERMONT PARKS PRESCRIPTION

Patient's Name: _____ Age: _____

Physical activity = Good Health = Good Medicine!

Sig: 1 free visit for one person to a Vermont State Park day use area.

Signature _____ Date: _____

Sponsored by Vermont State Parks vtstateparks.com and Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Vermontfitness.org (Facebook @ VT Fitness and Sports)

Prescription Number: 03951 Expires 10/1/22

What can we do?

- Promote patients to interact in green spaces as evidence-based treatment
- Promote activity interactions with nature
- Identify alternative means to treat anxiety and depression in conjunction with traditional treatments.
- Encourage PCP's with access to the free park program to utilize this resource more with patients.

Parks near by

- These are ten parks in Chittenden county.
- 1 park per 16,098 people.
- 1 park per 53 square miles.
- Chittenden county ranked 1 out of 14 counties in Parks per capita and ranked 1st for Parks per square mile.

Baird Park

1138 Pine Street

Burlington, VT

Calahan Park

Locust Street

Burlington, VT

Dorset Park

600 Swift Street

South Burlington, VT

Farrell Park

Farrell Street

South Burlington, VT

Foster Road Park

111 West Street

Essex, VT

Maple Street Park

75 Maple Street

Essex, VT

Red Rocks Park

Central Avenue

South Burlington, VT

Roosevelt Park Playground

57 Oak Street

Burlington, VT

Sand Hill Park

208 Sand Hill Road

Essex, VT

Williston Community Park

19 Central School Drive

Williston, VT

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www.countyoffice.org/vt-chittenden-county-park/

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