

Pesticide exposure and depression among agricultural workers in France

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Abstrak

Pesticides are ubiquitous neurotoxicants, and several lines of evidence suggest that exposure may be associated with depression. Epidemiologic evidence has focused largely on organophosphate exposures, while research on other pesticides is limited. We collected detailed pesticide use history from farmers recruited in 1998-2000 in France. Among 567 farmers aged 37-78 years, 83 (14.6%) self-reported treatment or hospitalization for depression. On the basis of the reported age at the first such instance, we used adjusted Cox proportional hazards models to estimate hazard ratios and 95% confidence intervals for depression (first treatment or hospitalization) by exposure to different pesticides. The hazard ratio for depression among those who used herbicides was 1.93 (95% confidence interval (CI): 0.95, 3.91); there was no association with insecticides or fungicides. Compared with nonusers, those who used herbicides for < 19 years and ≥ 19 years (median for all herbicide users, 19 years) had hazard ratios of 1.51 (95% CI: 0.62, 3.67) and 2.31 (95% CI: 1.05, 5.10), respectively. Similar results were found for total hours of use. Results were stronger when adjusted for insecticides and fungicides. There is widespread use of herbicides by the general public, although likely at lower levels than in agriculture. Thus, determining whether similar associations are seen at lower levels of exposure should be explored.