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UNIVERSAL CREDIT RECEIPT AMONG PATIENTS WHO ARE ACCESSING SECONDARY MENTAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES: RESULTS FROM A NOVEL DATA LINKAGE

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Background:

In 2013, Universal Credit (UC) was introduced replacing six benefits plus tax credits by the UK government, to 'make work pay' and the welfare system easier to navigate. However, concerns have been raised that this change may have disproportionally impacted vulnerable groups of people in our society, for example those with mental health problems.

Aims:

To explore, in detail, UC receipt among patients who accessed secondary mental healthcare services, including the different conditionality regimes. To explore if age, sex, ethnicity, deprivation, and psychiatric diagnosis are associated with UC receipt and the conditionality regime patients are allocated to.

Methods:

Mental healthcare records from the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust linked with benefits records from the Department for Work and Pensions. Benefits records were restricted to those that covered years 2013-2019.

Results:

Preliminary results indicated that of the 172,083 patients with linked data, 42,997 had received UC at some point. UC recipients were more likely to be male, younger, lived in more deprived areas, from a non-White ethnic background and had a recorded psychiatric diagnosis, than patients who had not received UC.

Most UC recipients were allocated to a conditionality regime that required them to look for work, followed by those who did not have to meet any work-related requirements. However, the number of patients in the latter group was much smaller.

Conclusions:

Our findings have the potential to impact welfare and public health policies, as well as patient care.