

Does Depression Look Different in Old Age?

Claire Thompson

Academic Dept For Old Age Psychiatry, POWH, Sydney.

“Age and Gender in the Phenomenology of Depression”

Henry Brodaty, Breda Cullen, Claire Thompson, Philip Mitchell, Gordon Parker, Kay Wilhelm, Marie-Paule Austin, Gin Mahli. AJGP (in press).

Depression in Older Age: Does it Look Different?

- Increased withdrawal, apathy, lack of drive, suicidality, guilt
 - Zung, Arch Gen Psychiatry 1965; APA DSM-II, 1968; Brown et al: Am J Psychiatry 1984; Ruegg et al, Psychiatr Clin North Am 1988.
- Or no such difference?
 - Gurland, J Gerontology 1976; Blazer et al, J Am Geriatr Soc 1987; Musetti et al, Br J Psychiatry 1989.

Does Age of First Onset Matter?

- Late onset: higher apathy, delusions & hypochondriasis
 - Krishnan et al, Am J Psychiatry 1995; Alexopoulos et al, Psychiatr Clin North Am 1988; Brown et al, Am J Psychiatry 1984; Brodaty et al, J Aff Disord 2001.
- Or no such difference?
 - Musetti et al, Br J Psychiatry 1989; Brodaty et al, J Affect Disord 1991; Conwell et al, J Affect Disord 1989; Carroll, Psychopathology and the Brain, 1991.

Why the conflicting results?

- Different cut-offs for age, and age of onset?
- Few investigations of depression in over 65 years?
- Small sample sizes?
- Different types of depression?
- Different measures of depression?
- Effect of age influenced by gender?

Gender Differences

- Lifetime prevalence in women about twice that of men
- Older women may have more mood related symptoms & more appetite disturbance
- Older men may have more motivational symptoms & more neurovegetative symptoms

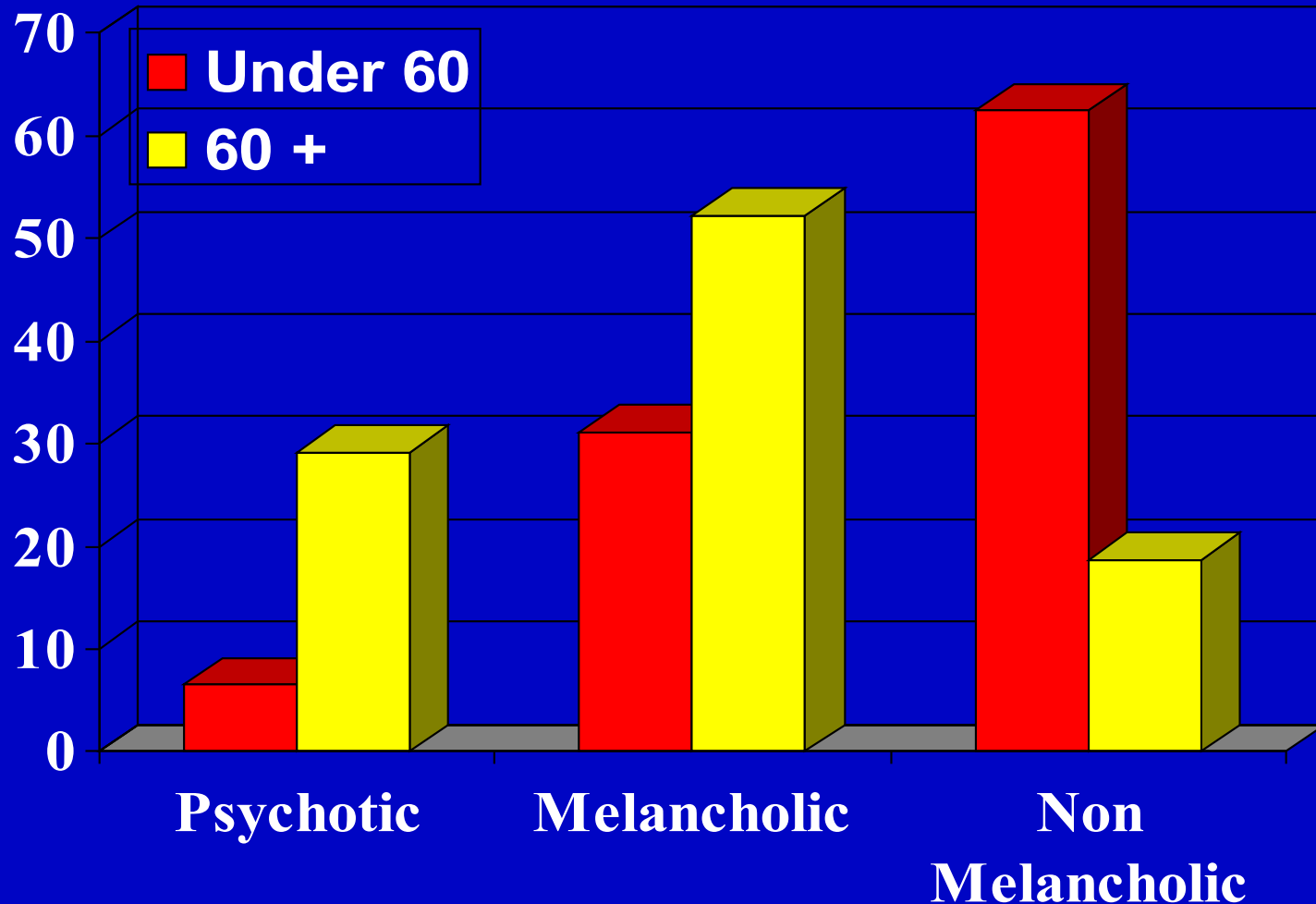
Aims

- Confirm previous findings on age and age of onset differences
- Explore older cut off points for age and age of onset
- Investigate relationship of gender and current age on phenomenology
- Explore differences in self-rated and clinician-rated depression

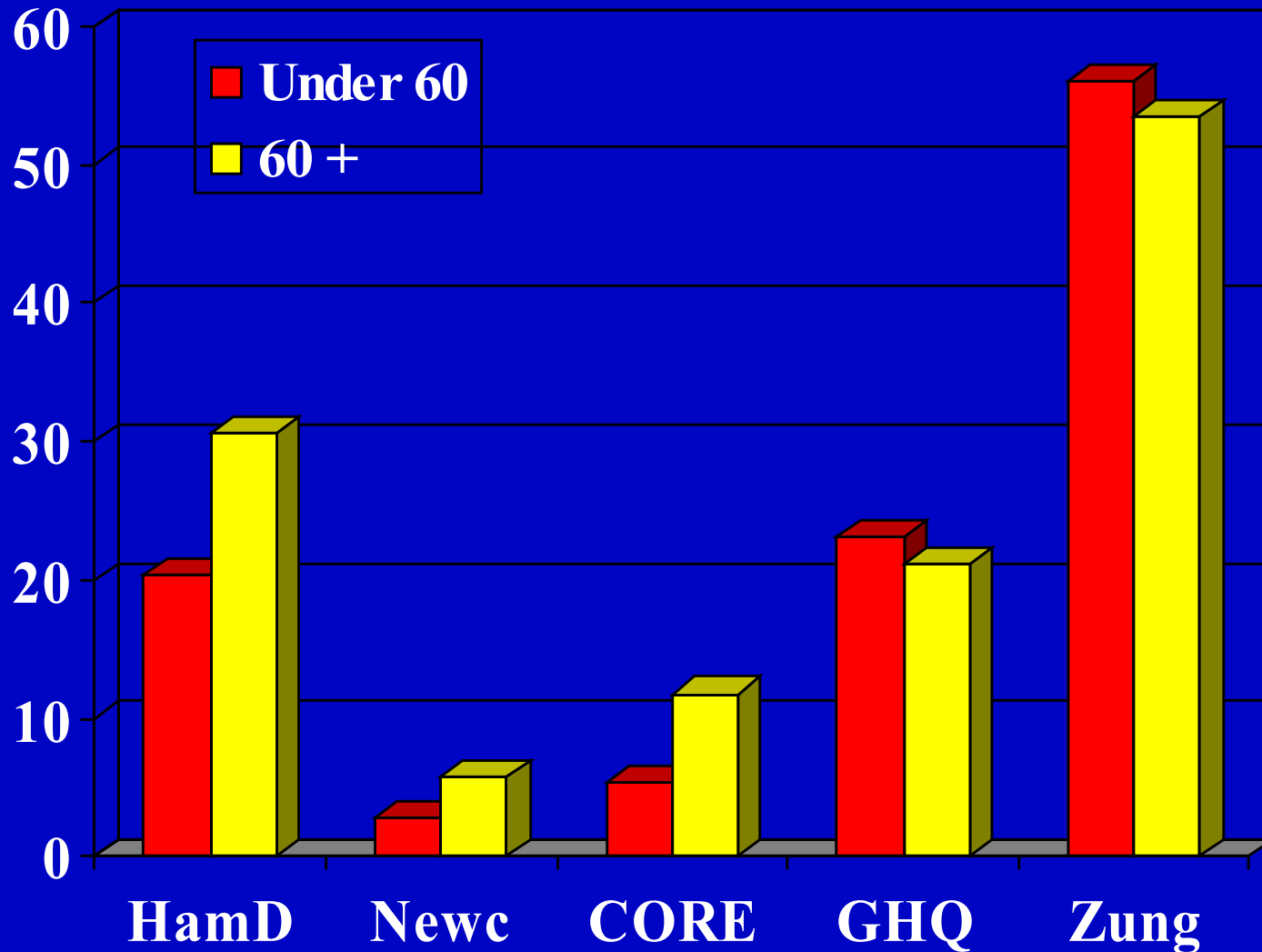
The Mood Disorders Unit

- 1199 consecutive patients, reduced to 810 after exclusions
- DSM diagnosis by structured interview
- Patient completed GHQ; Zung or BDI
- Clinician rated on Hamilton, GAF, Newcastle (endogenous depression) and CORE

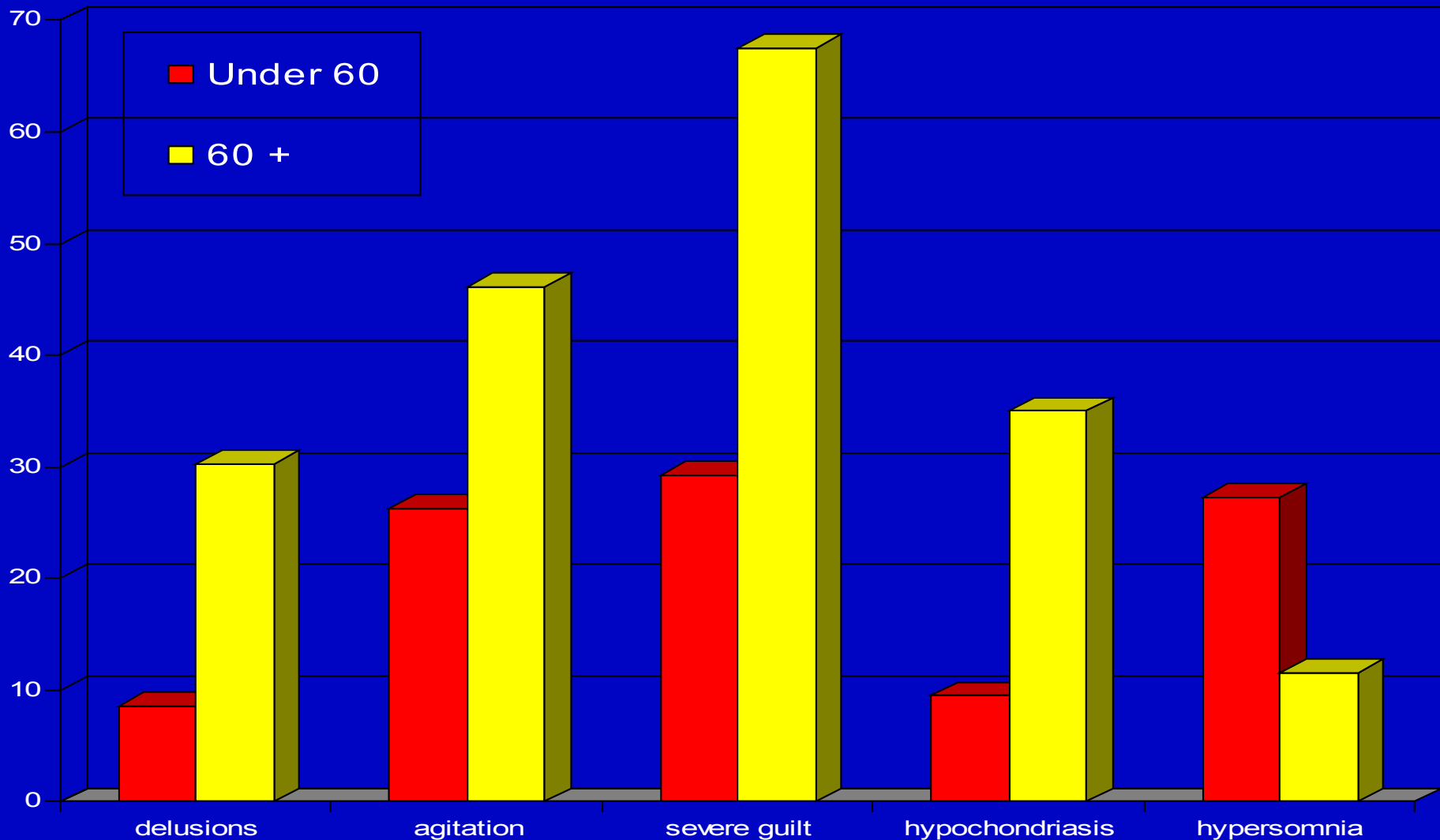
Diagnosis by Current Age:



Severity by Current Age:



Symptoms by Current Age:



Other Analyses:

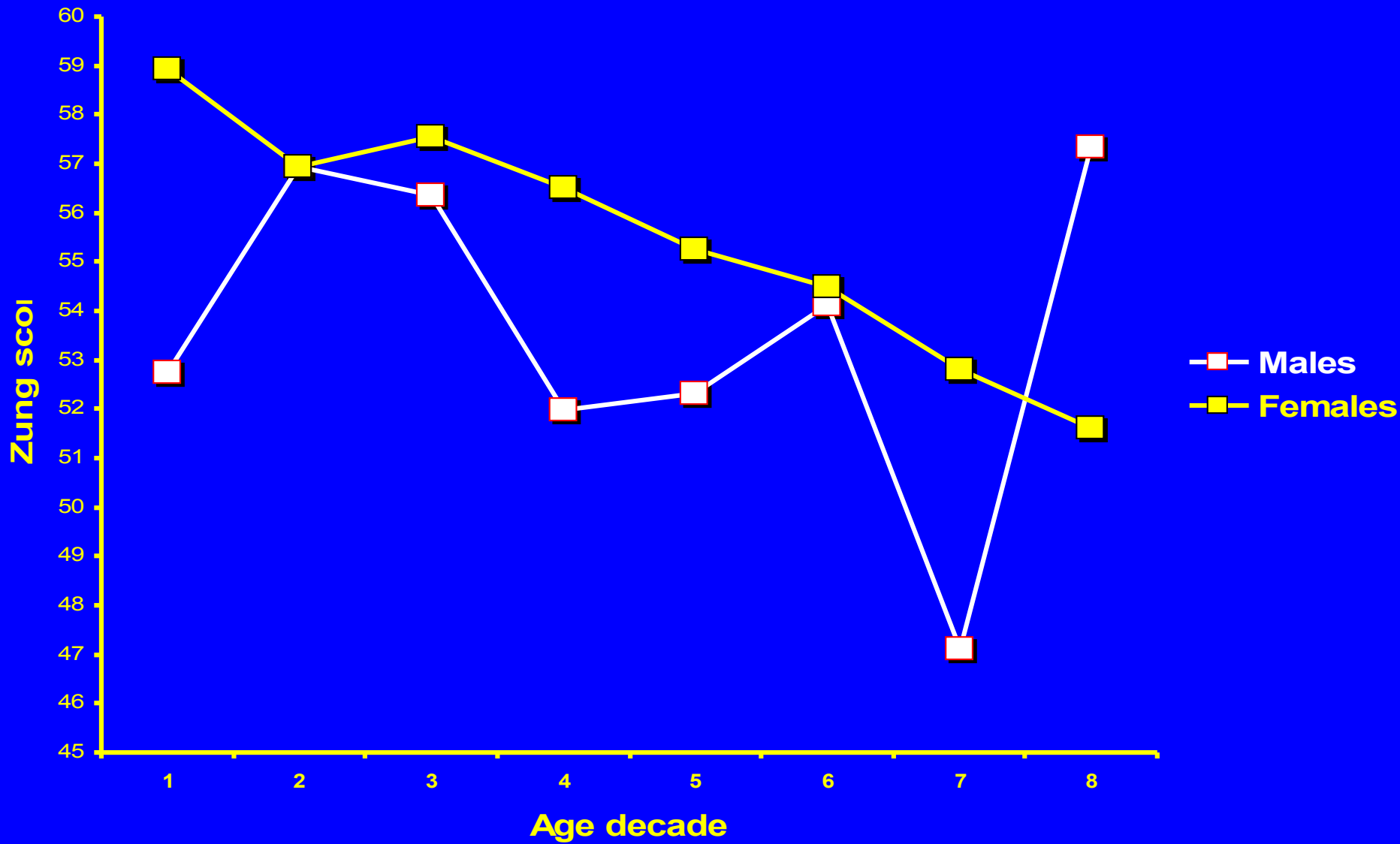
- Analyses repeated for non-psychotic patients only : similar result
- Age 60 - 69 v's 70+ : non-significant
- Phenomenology of first and further episodes not significantly different
- Males more likely than females to be in first episode

Age of Onset:

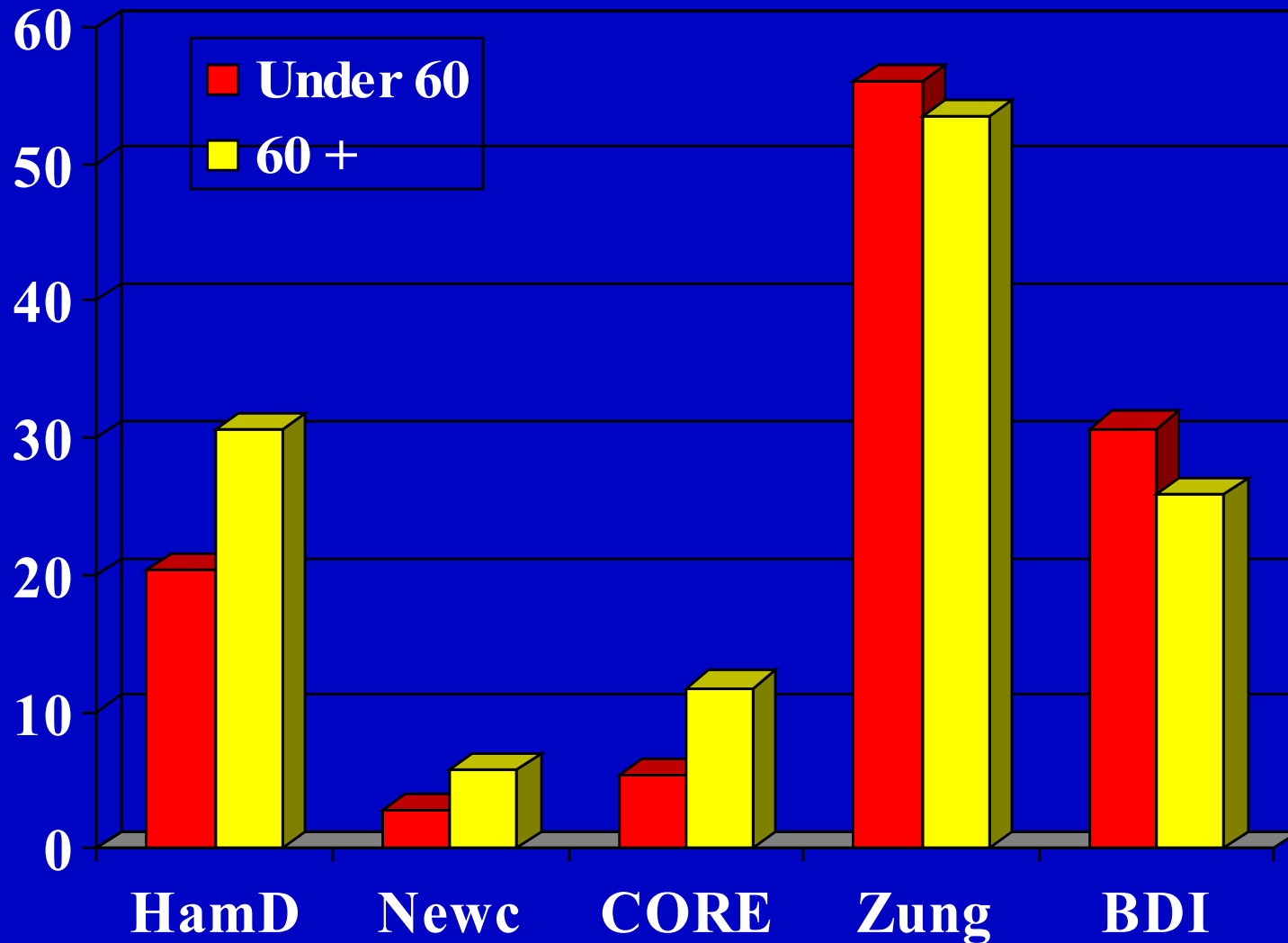
- EO (by 60), n = 92, LO (after 60) n = 86
- Current age a covariate
- No difference in demographics, diagnosis or clinical variables except more hypochondriasis in LO.

Gender Differences:

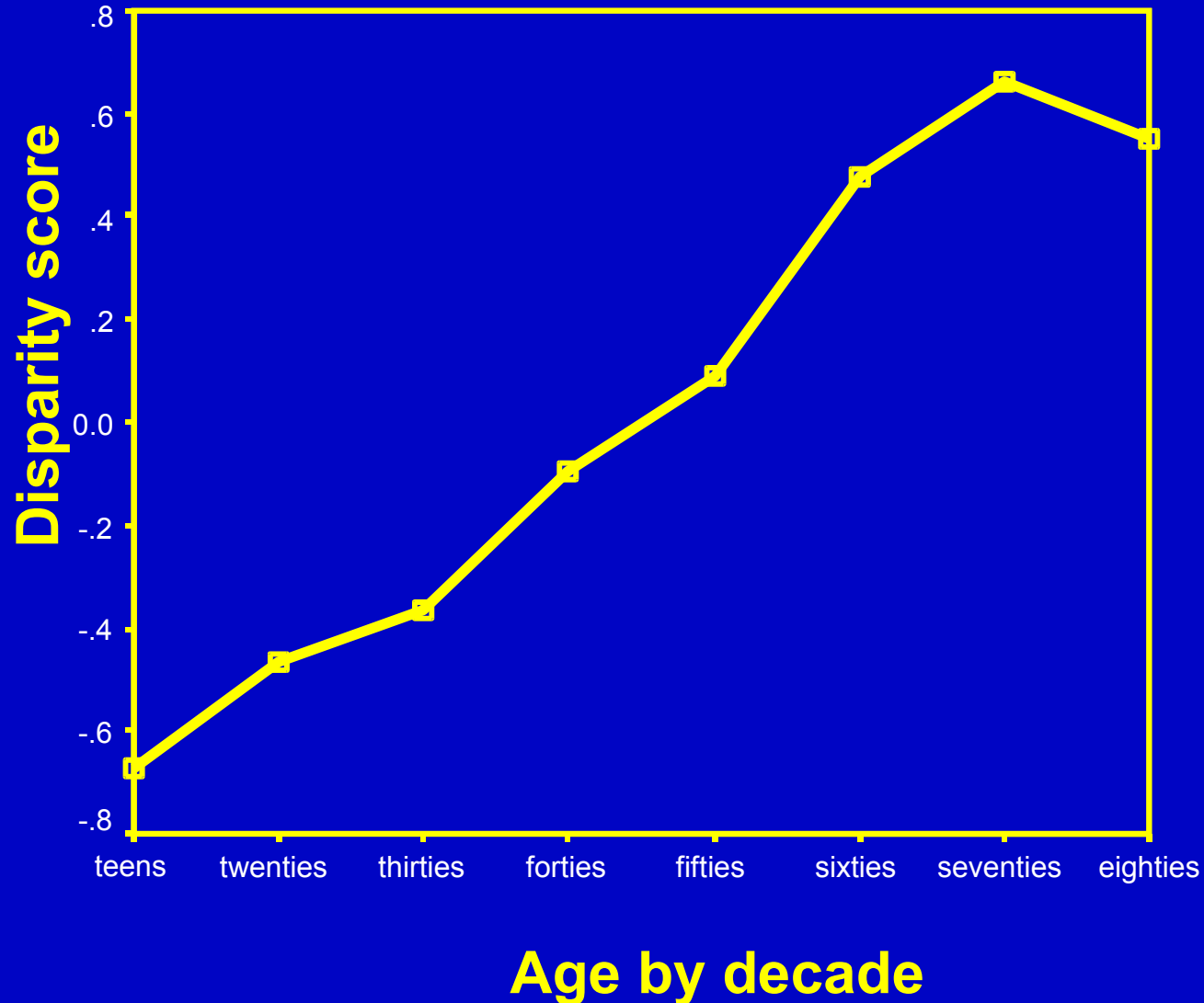
- No differences found in a direct comparison (controlling for age)
- No age by gender interactions found
- Different patterns emerged when each gender analysed separately
- Lower Zung score, increased motor agitation & severe guilt for 60+ more likely in females



Severity by Current Age:



Self-rated vs Clinician-rated:



Limitations:

- Small N in males over 70 reduced power of analyses of age X gender differences
- Different scales used in different cohorts
- Age differences below 60 years unexplored

Depression in Old Age:

- More psychotic & melancholic depression
- More psychomotor agitation, retardation & non-interactiveness, hypochondriasis and severe guilt.
- Less hypersomnia

Depression in Old Age:

- Men & women are not cross-sectionally different, but may have a different lifespan trajectory of symptoms
- The disparity of self-rated and clinician rated depression increases with age.

“Age and Gender in the Phenomenology of Depression”. Henry Brodaty, Breda Cullen, Claire Thompson, Philip Mitchell, Gordon Parker, Kay Wilhelm, Marie-Paule Austin, Gin Mahli. American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry (in press).

We are grateful to Annette Koschera and Dusan Hadzi-Pavlovic for their statistical advice, and to Kay Parker for access to the databases. This project was funded by Eli Lilly, Australia, and by the NHMRC Program Grant number 222708.

www.med.unsw.edu.au/adfoap