

Investigating Suicide Cases in Attica, Greece: Insight from an Autopsy-Based Study

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Abstract : Introduction: The aim of this study is the investigation of characteristics of suicide, as documented in autopsies during a five-year interval in the greater area of Attica, including the city of Athens. This could reveal possible protective or aggravating factors for suicide risk during a period strongly associated with the Greek debt crisis. Materials and Methods: Data was obtained following registration of suicide cases among autopsies performed in the Forensic Medicine and Toxicology Department, School of Medicine, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, during the time interval from January 2011 to December 2015. Anonymity and medical secret were respected. A series of demographic and social factors in addition to special characteristics of suicide were entered into a specially established pre-coded database. These factors include social data as well as psychiatric background and certain autopsy characteristics. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and Fisher's exact test. The software used was STATA/SE 13 (Stata Corp., College Station, TX, USA). Results: A total of 162 cases were studied, 128 men and 34 women. Age ranged from 14 to 97 years old with an average of 53 years, presenting two peaks around 40 and 60 years. A 56% of cases were single/ divorced/ widowed. 25% of cases occurred during the weekend, and 66% of cases occurred in the house. A predominance of hanging as the leading method of suicide (41.4%) followed by jumping from a height (22.8%) and firearms (19.1%) was noted. Statistical analysis showed an association was found between suicide method and gender ($P < 0.001$, Fisher's exact test); specifically, no woman used a firearm while only one man used medication overdose (against four women). Discussion: Greece has historically been one of the countries with the lowest suicide rates in Europe. Given a possible change in suicide trends during the financial crisis, further research seems necessary in order to establish risk factors. According to our study, suicide is more frequent in men who are not married, inside their house. Gender seems to be a factor affecting the method of suicide. These results seem in accordance with the international literature. Stronger than expected predominance in male suicide can be associated with failure to live up to social and family expectations for financial reasons.

Keywords : autopsy, Greece, risk factors, suicide

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