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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Alcohol-dependent patients attempting and not attempting suicide: a comparison

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Abstract

Background: Alcohol dependence is a psychiatric disorder associated with an increased risk of suicidal behaviour. This is also associated with an increased number of suicide risk factors. **Objective:** The current study examined the sociodemographic and clinical characteristics of a number of alcohol-dependent patients who attempted suicide.

Methods: We studied a consecutive series of 377 alcohol-dependent patients in our in-patient clinics. Their alcohol-use histories were assessed through semistructured interviews. The Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire, the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test and the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale were administered to all patients. Serum total cholesterol levels, mean corpuscular volume, the liver enzymes gamma glutamyl transferase, aspartate aminotransferase and alanine aminotransferase were routinely measured. In the statistical analyses, Student's *t*-test and chi-squared tests were applied.

Results: Of the 377 alcohol-dependent patients, 89 (23.6%) had histories of attempted suicide. Thirty-four (42.5%) of the 80 female alcohol-dependent patients and 55 (18.5%) of the 297 male alcohol-dependent patients had attempted suicide; this gender difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 27.7$, $P < 0.001$). A greater proportion of the suicide attempters than of the non-attempters met the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual IV* criteria for another psychiatric disorder (60.6%, $n = 54$, vs. 40.6%, $n = 117$; $\chi^2 = 14.8$; $df = 6$; $P < 0.05$). The difference of total cholesterol levels between female (mean = 144.0, SD = 58.3; mean = 158.0, SD = 83.9; $t = 4.5$; $P < 0.05$) and male (mean = 133.7, SD = 50.5; mean = 163.6, SD = 69.7; $t = 11.7$; $P < 0.01$) attempters and non-attempters was statistically significant.

Conclusion: These results suggest that suicide attempts in alcohol-dependent patients are associated with more profound biopsychosocial pathology and decreased serum cholesterol levels.