

THE SHARE OF DRUG ADDICTS AMONG COMPLETED SUICIDES

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Abstract:The article discusses the issues of suicide mortality among drug users. When comparing the indicators of the contingent of people registered with drug addiction treatment and those who died by suicide, 64 cases of suicide committed by drug addicts were identified. Of these, 63 were men and 1 was a woman (the ratio is sharply shifted - M:F - 63:1, which differs significantly from the general population). Most often (64.0%), deceased drug addicts were in the age category of 36-45 years.

Keywords:drug addicts, drug users, users of psychoactive substances, suicide, statistics, suicide records.

INTRODUCTION

Suicides constitute one of the leading categories in the structure of mortality from external causes, the reduction of which is the most important medical and social task [1, 2, 3]. The primary feature of suicidal mortality is the potential possibility of its regulation by influencing pro-suicidal factors and expanding medical and preventive work in risk groups [4].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sources of medical information were the combined databases of personal data of the Bureau of Forensic Medical Examination (sectional material of confirmed suicides) and the Regional Narcological Dispensary (register of registered persons), as well as statistical data on suicides in the study region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mental health problems are the most common and best explored risk factor associated with suicidal ideas, suicide attempts and completed suicide. About 90% of all people who commit suicide met the diagnostic criteria for one or more psychiatric disorders. People who abuse alcohol and/or drugs or are dependent on them, attempting suicide nearly six times more often than people who do not abuse these substances. The rate of completed suicide among addicts is 2 to 3 times higher than among the males who are not addicts. Among women, the use of substances increases the risk of suicide for 6.5 to 9 times compared to women non addicts.

In most cases, drug addicts attempt suicide by overuse of drugs that is an overdose, or a combination of drugs and tablets, while in a few cases the manner in which the suicide is attempted is not directly related to drugs. Although there is a correlation between the disorder caused by the use of substances and suicidal behavior, a large number of addicts will never attempt suicide. It is therefore important to identify those individuals with the disorder caused by the use of substances that may be at higher risk for suicide.

A comparison of data from the dispensary drug addiction register and the Bureau of Forensic Medical Examination revealed 64 suicides. Two thirds (67.2%) of the suicides were registered for opiate addiction (Table 1).

Table 1.

Distribution of suicides by type of addiction and year of suicide

Type of addiction	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Opiates	9	75,0	9	75,0	14	73,7	6	85,7	5	35,7	43	67,2
Cannabinoids	2	16,7	2	16,7	3	15,8			5	35,7	12	18,8
Psychostimulants			1	8,3	2	10,5	1	14,3	4	28,6	8	12,5

Solvents	1	8,3									1	1,5
Total	12	100,0	12	100,0	19	100,0	7	100,0	14	100,0	64	100,0

A study of the gender composition of individuals who committed completed suicide showed the following distribution: 63 men, 1 woman. The ratio is dramatically skewed – M:F – 63:1, which differs significantly from the general population indicators in Russia, where the number of men dying from suicide is 4.8 times higher than the number of women (M:F ratio – 4.8:1) [21, 22]. Most often (64.0%) the deceased drug addicts belonged to the age category 36-45 years. The average age values were determined for opiate users (42.7±2.6 years) and for individuals using synthetic psychostimulants (37.1±2.9 years). The indicators we have identified are also significantly lower than the average age indicators of suicides in the general population, which are 47 years for men and 54 years for women [21].

All the identified cases of suicide are related to the so-called harsh (brutal) methods. Self-hanging is the most common (87.5%), while self-cutting is recorded more than 9 times less frequently (9.4%). Intentional overdoses were not identified in any case.

The share of drug addicts in the total number of suicides in the Tashkent region in different years of the study period (2019-2023) ranges from 3.2% to 6.5%, i.e. an average of 4.6% (Table 2).

Table 2.

The share of drug addicts in the total number of suicides in 2019–2023.

Indicator	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Number of drug addict suicides, abs.	12	12	19	7	14	64
Number of suicides, total, abs.	315	300	292	220	254	1381
Share of drug addicts in the number of suicides, %	3,8	4,0	6,5	3,2	5,5	4,6

The figures we obtained are somewhat lower than the figures cited by individual domestic [19] and foreign [20] authors. Obviously, this is primarily due to the absence of intentional drug overdoses among registered suicides, the confirmation of which requires not only pathological and laboratory studies, but also a posthumous psychological and psychiatric examination [23].

CONCLUSION

The obtained data allow us to estimate the “lower level” of the proportion of drug addicts among the lethal contingent, and also indicate the need to improve the system of posthumous diagnostics of suicides of psychoactive substance users in order to obtain more reliable indicators. One of the options for solving the problem is a systematic approach, including entering into medical documentation and recording all forms of suicidal activity registered during the patient’s observation period. On the one hand, this will allow, if necessary, to use archival data for an expert decision on intentional and voluntary departure from life. On the other hand, it will provide an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of measures to prevent and correct suicidal behavior in risk groups.

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