

SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR IN WOMEN

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Abstract: The review presents modern scientific concepts of suicidal behavior in women based on the analysis of literary sources. It examines the problems of prevalence of completed suicides and suicide attempts in the female population, typical socio-demographic and medical characteristics of female suicides, suicide risk factors typical for women, and features of methods and circumstances of women's suicidal actions.

Keywords: suicide, suicidal behavior, women.

INTRODUCTION

The information on suicidal behavior in women presented in modern scientific literature is fragmentary and covers only individual aspects of the problem, while full-scale and comprehensive studies in this area, as far as we have been able to establish, have not yet been conducted. This review summarizes the literature data on the issue under consideration in order to form a complete picture of the current understanding of suicidal behavior in women. The prevalence of completed suicides in the female population is certainly subject to geographic and national fluctuations; however, studies conducted in recent years make it possible to estimate, to some extent, the average global level of this phenomenon.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The rate of female suicides in most countries of the world, including our country, is significantly lower than the rate of male suicides. An exception in this regard is China, where today, according to A.T. Cheng and C.-S. Lee [1], the rate of suicides among women is very high, especially among young women living in rural areas. At the same time, specific differences in the frequency of suicides by men and women are assessed in the literature differently. According to the WHO Report [2], the ratio of the number of men and women who commit suicide is 3.5: 1. According to numerous sample studies, the number of male suicides per female suicide ranges from 3 to 8 [3]. The reason for such significant discrepancies, apparently, lies in the differences in the studied samples according to such characteristics as place of residence (city, village), ethnic and cultural characteristics, as well as different time periods of the studies. The importance of the last factor is drawn to attention by D. Bogoyavlensky [3], who, having analyzed the dynamics of the prevalence of suicides in our country over a long period of time, established that in years of a general decrease in the suicide rate, the gap between the number of men and the number of women among suicides decreases to 3 times, and in years of an increase it increases to 5 times.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data provided in the literature on the prevalence of suicide attempts among women are less accurate due to the complexity of statistical recording of this form of suicidal behavior and the absence of an official system for registering suicide attempts in most regions. Selective epidemiological studies can shed some light on this issue. Thus, the data on the frequency of suicide attempts among the female population of Moscow in 1998 provided in the monograph by V.F. Voitsek [4] range from 15.0 to 105.9 per 100,000, depending on the age group (with age, the frequency of suicide attempts that do not result in a fatal outcome decreases in women). I.V. Zhuravleva et al. [2] report that the average frequency of suicide attempts among female residents of Ivanovo reaches 110.7 per 100,000 female population, and in the age group of 14-29 years this figure is 241.8, and in the age group of 30 years and older – 81.8. The literature data on the ratio of the frequency of suicide attempts among women and men today look quite contradictory. Thus, it is indicated that in our country the

frequency of suicide attempts among women exceeds the corresponding figure for men [3]. According to the report of A. Schmidtke et al. [4], the frequency of suicide attempts among women is higher than among men in most European countries, with the exception of Finland. Touching upon the suicidal behavior of adolescents, L. Kotila and J. Lonnqvist [1] report that among teenagers, girls also commit suicide attempts more often than boys. At the same time, specific data on the issue of the ratio of the frequency of suicide attempts committed by men and women differ significantly among different authors. For example, according to the report of S.V. Vaulin [2], women commit suicide attempts 1.4 times more often than men. The American manual of psychiatry edited by R. Scheider [3] indicates that the frequency of suicide attempts among women is 2-3 times higher than among men. An even higher figure is given by G.I. Kaplan and B.J. Sadok [4], who report that for every one male suicide attempt there are four female ones. Similar data are contained in the article by L.N. Kasimova, who found that thoughts of suicide and attempts to commit suicide among women in the general population of a large industrial city are encountered almost 4 times more often than among men. On the other hand, a number of authors report a practical equality in the frequency of suicide attempts among women and men. Finally, according to V.F. Voitsek and A.S. Khristo, men predominate among persons committing suicide attempts while intoxicated, and women predominate among sober suicides.

Considering the professional status of an individual as a factor in suicide risk, I.H. Makinen and D. Wasserman report that high suicide rates are typical for women with the highest and lowest professional status (determined by qualification level and official position), while low suicide rates are typical for women occupying positions of average professional status. According to the authors, women differ in this from men, among whom the suicide rate is lowest among individuals with the highest professional status and highest among individuals with the lowest professional status. E. Frank and A.D. Dingle [4] draw attention to the high frequency of suicide attempts among female doctors.

CONCLUSION

The literature data presented in this review, when summarized, allow us to formulate a number of provisions concerning suicidal behavior in women, which can be considered established to date. First of all, there is no doubt that women commit suicide several times less often than men (with the exception of adolescents, for whom the data are still contradictory). Suicidal attempts that do not end in death, on the contrary, are apparently more often committed by women, but the ratio of the frequency of female and male suicide attempts remains unclear.

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