

Prevalence of Suicidal Ideation Among Students

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Introduction: In Portugal there are no national epidemiologic registers on the prevalence/incidence of suicidal ideation and attempts. Although there is no evidence that suicide is higher in University students than in other people of the same age, it is a cause of premature death.

Aims: To analyze the prevalence and characteristics of suicidality in university students

Methods: 549 University students (80.1% females) filled in a booklet of questionnaires that included the Suicidal Behaviour Section of the Diagnostic Interview of Genetic Studies (Azevedo et al, 1993; Nurnberger et al., 1994), which was slight modified.

Results: 0.4% reported lifetime poor psychological health and 1.3% reported lifetime hospitalizations due to emotional/behavioural problems. Lifetime thoughts of death, lifetime active suicidal ideation, and lifetime suicidal attempts were described by 20.4%, 11.9% and by 2.3% of the students, respectively. Regarding the more severe lifetime suicide attempt (N=15) the method used was predominantly self-poisoning (medication) (9/13), 40% (6/15) were hospitalized after this attempt, 53.3% (8/15) reported death wishes when the act was performed, and 60% (9/15) considered that death could be the consequence of the act. During last month suicidal ideation occurred in 1.9% of the students. During the last two weeks suicidal ideation without planning was found in 2.2% and 0.2% refereed they are going to attempt suicide if they will have an opportunity.

Conclusions: In university students recent, frequent and severe suicide ideation might occur. Results highlighted the need for suicidality prevention/early intervention and that Health University Care Services should screen systematically suicidal ideation.