

P03-309

SUICIDE RISK AND MARITAL STATUS

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Objectives: Different types of marital status are associated with elevated/decreased suicidal risk.

The aim of this research was to study marital status change and the effect of its recency in relation to suicidal behaviour.

Method: Suicide victims (1614) in Slovenia and matched controls (4617) were compared for incidence and recency of marital status change during the last five years in their lives.

Results: 10.7% of suicide victims have had a marital status change in the last 5 years as compared to 5.6% of the controls. Becoming widowed and getting divorced proved to be a risk factor for suicidal behaviour. 45,7% of all marital status changes in suicide victims occurred in the last year prior to suicide, whereas marital status changes in the control group were equally distributed over the five years. Recency of marital status change significantly affected suicide risk in interaction with age and type of change: The increase in the risk was much higher for recently married than for the recently divorced or widowed people.

Conclusions: Becoming widowed or divorced represents a risk factor for suicidal behaviour. The first year after the change is critical for elevated suicidal risk, in particular for the supposedly positive change of getting married.