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Urban-rural Differences in the Correlates of Parasuicide in the Regions Affected by Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster

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Introduction: Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident was the greatest technological disaster in history. There is evidence that the accident has had a significant long-term impact on psychological well-being of the affected population. In particular, the rate of suicidal behavior has increased dramatically among the exposed population. At the same time, little epidemiological information about parasuicidal individuals is available. **Objectives:** This study was design to extend our understanding of suicidal behavior by examining urban-rural differences in the sociodemographic and mental health characteristics of male suicide attempters in the region affected by Chernobyl nuclear disaster. **Methods:** We interviewed 243 male suicide attempters (166 urban residents (UR) and 77 rural residents (RR)) received treatment at Gomel regional psychiatric hospital (Belarus). **Results:** The most important risk factors identified were younger age (18-29), being single (71.4% of RR and 70.5% of UR), being unemployed (37.7% of RR and 38.6% of UR), having mental disorders (100% of RR and 98.2% of UR), having previous suicide attempts (19.5% of RR and 16.9% UR). The most frequent diagnoses were mental disorders due to psychoactive substances use (76.6% of RR and 71.1% of UR). The prevalence of alcohol dependence was higher among RR compared with UR (50.6% vs. 45.8%). Consumption of alcohol at the time of the parasuicidal act was reported more commonly by RR than by UR (61.0% vs. 56%). **Conclusions:** These findings are consistent with previous research indicating a causal role for mental health problems and alcohol abuse in suicidal behavior.