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THE SUICIDAL ADOLESCENT PROFILE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN ADOLESCENTS WITH AND WITHOUT SUICIDAL BEHAVIOURS

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Context: Suicide and suicidal behaviours are a growing concern among adolescents.

Objective: Describe discriminating characteristics of adolescents with suicidal behaviours followed by our psychiatric consultations.

Methods: A cross-sectional sample of 100 adolescents (aged 12 to 21), from the adolescent psychiatry and youth suicide consultations, at Hospital Santa Maria Psychiatry Department, were submitted to a semi-structured interview. The sample was divided in two groups: with and without suicidal behaviour (the first being defined as previous suicide attempt, parasuicidal gestures or self-mutilation). Demographic, psychosocial and psychopathological data was taken and compared.

Results: 98 completed protocol. Suicidal behaviour group included 48 subjects. Age, years of education, family type, sex differences, psychosocial difficulties (school, family, peers, affective), therapeutic objectives (exception on family relations) were not statistically discriminating. Suicidal ideation as consultation motive, emergency room referral, previous attempts of follow-up, not having as objective improvement of family relationships, were highly associated to the suicidal behaviour group ($p \leq 0.001$). A non significant tendency was observed towards depressive syndrome in the latter.

Conclusion: Identifying adolescents at risk for suicidal behaviours isn't an easy task, most characteristics are not discriminating. The most effective way seems to be asking directly about suicidal ideas. Awareness should increase in emergency room referrals motivated by suicidal ideas, in adolescents who tried multiple follow-ups and that seem to be disappointed by family support.