

From the acoustical field the following findings are demonstrated and discussed: elevated click thresholds in auditory signal detection, changed ear asymmetry in dichotic click detection and differences in dichotic listening asymmetries according to symptomatology.

The most important results from the so far investigated optical perceptual disturbances in depressive disorders are: breakdown of perceptual defence in the form of greater access to emotionally unpleasant stimuli referring to the tachistoscopic recognition of neutral/unpleasant words, impairments at near-distance assessments, disturbances in recognition and discrimination of facial emotions — especially concerning the perception of emotional chimeric faces.

The discussion of the reported results gives special attention to their diagnostic value and calls for clinical and experimental procedures first of all at continuing the differentiated and by means of replications studies substantiated apprehension of perceptual disturbances.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY STUDY OF SUICIDE IN HIGH RISK OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

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Data from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys between 1979–1990 suggest that certain occupational groups are at higher risk of death from suicide than other causes, compared to the general population. This study has been carried out to examine the factors associated with suicide in two of these groups, medical practitioners and farmers. A consecutive series of suicide deaths in farmers and doctors from 1991–1993 has been examined in detail using coroners' Notes of Evidence, general practice records and, where possible, interviews with surviving relatives. The overall aim of the study is to identify possible preventive strategies for the future and to describe the needs of bereaved relatives.

The methodological issues involved in performing psychological autopsy studies will of this kind be discussed.

Results: The results suggest that, when full information is available, most suicides in these two groups occur in the context of multiple personal and work related problems. Occupation related stress is rarely the only important factor. There are high rates of depression in both groups and treatment for this may have been compromised by unwillingness to seek help in the farmers and medical status in doctors. Easy availability of a lethal method is an important factor in both groups although shotgun related deaths among farmers were less frequent that expected.

Possible preventive strategies will be discussed with emphasis on education of people in high risk occupational groups as well as health professionals.

TRENDS IN SUICIDE IN NORTHERN IRELAND 1922–1992

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Objectives: Suicide is now a major public health issue and concern is growing at the rise in the rate of suicide, particularly in young men. Northern Ireland has a small, reasonably static population which has high levels of unemployment and has endured a quarter of a century of civil unrest. This study looks at the changes in the rate of suicide and in the methods used over a long period.

Methods: Suicide data were obtained from the office of the Registrar General of Birth, Marriages and Deaths in Belfast.

Summary: Suicide is increasing, particularly, in young men. Men prefer more violent measures. There appears to be a link with unemployment, but not with civil unrest.

Conclusions: The rise in the rate of suicide may not be halted in the absence of changes of a political or social nature.

PROLONGED DEPRESSION: COPING STYLES AND THERAPY OUTCOME

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The objective of the study was to explore coping styles in patients with prolonged depression exceeding 6 months duration related to marital conflicts. Since male patients with this kind of mental pathology were quite rare our investigation included as subjects 30 female out-patients with mild or moderate depressive episode (F32.0 or F32.1), dysthymia (F34.1) or prolonged depressive reaction (F43.21) diagnosed according to ICD 10 criteria. Mood disturbances appeared in all cases as a result of protracted marital conflict: severe arguments, separation or divorce due to husband's infidelity, alcohol abuse with or without violence. Russian version of J. Amerikhan's "Coping Strategy Indicator" (CSI) performed by the authors of presentation was applied for coping styles assessment at the baseline and after two months therapy. Psychopathology ratings were conducted alongside utilizing Kellner's Symptom Questionnaire (SQ). Low scores on "Problem Solving" and "Avoidance" scales in addition to very high scores of "Seeking Support" scale were found in the initial investigation. These peculiarities of three basic coping modes disclosed in our sample were suggested to be responsible for maladaptive nature and excessive duration of psychic reactions to stressful life-events. However, the signs of clinical improvement after two months of cognitive-behavioural intervention reflected in decrease of SQ scores corresponded with changes in CSI scores: increase in "Problem Solving" and/or "Avoidance" scales. The obtained findings support the opinion of coping process importance in onset and preservation of the so-called "psychogenous" mental pathology as well as for its treatment.

SUICIDE IN GREECE: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION AND RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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This study aimed to demonstrate the distribution pattern of suicides across the 52 prefectures of Greece and to investigate the possible relationship of suicide rates to socioeconomic factors. The total of 4,403 suicides recorded in Greece from 1980 to 1991 were analysed according to sex, age group and place of residence. Age- and sex-specific suicide rates were calculated for each prefecture separately. Age-standardised suicide rates exhibit a wide regional variation across Greece with differing patterns for males and females.

The possible relationship of the regional age-standardised rates to socioeconomic development was investigated using the General Index of Development (GID) as a measure of socioeconomic growth. The GID is calculated from parameters reflecting population growth, general infrastructure, economic well-being and productivity.

Regional suicide rates were found to be negatively correlated to the GID. Thus, suicide rates are high in underdeveloped prefectures and decrease significantly in prefectures of higher socioeconomic development. As demonstrated in previous studies, the psychiatric services available in each prefecture strongly correlate with the GID, a finding which might contribute to the above phenomenon.