



### G55 Suicide in Eastern Crete

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The goals of this paper are to present data on suicide cases from autopsy records of the Forensic Sciences Department of the University of Crete, during the years 1997-2001 and to inform the forensic community of the variation extent of parameters like sex, age, time, and method of suicide.

**Introduction:** When pain exceeds pain-coping resources, suicidal feelings are the result. Suicide prevention programs try to lower the incidence of the event but it is still a serious public health problem. It is well known that geographic variation and ethnic composition are very important parameters affecting suicide. This study is an attempt to provide detailed information of the present situation in Eastern Crete and try to find the slope of the relationship between the suicide cases in this area and the rest of the country.

**Methods/Results:** Data collection involved medico-legal records of completed suicide cases from January 1, 1997 to December 31, 2001. A total of 139 records were reviewed. Results indicated that 25.18% of the victims in successful suicides were females and 74.82% were males. Spring was the period of the year with the most elevated numbers and the highest month recorded was May. Of the cases reviewed, 15.82% of suicides were under the influence of alcohol and 8.63% under the influence of illegal drugs. Only one case under the age of 20 years old was observed, whereas in the U.S. approximately three fourths of all deaths among persons aged 10-24 years result from only four causes: motor vehicle crashes, other unintentional injuries, or homicide and suicide. Suicide rates among elderly were found to be low. A finding that is quite contradictory with the rest of Europe where the suicide cases in elderly are approximately equal to the youth levels. Suicide methods were mostly violent. The most frequent method was hanging, seen in the 36.69% of the all cases followed by fatal poisoning with an incidence of 29.5%. Poisoning was generally the result of pesticide ingestion and was very widely used by females. The use of firearms forms 13.67% of the cases and is used exclusively by males. Although some studies indicate that rural men of all ages are twice as likely to commit suicides as their urban counterparts, the authors' study showed that 79.14% of suicides occurred in Heraklion the mostly populated city of Crete.

**Conclusion:** Suicidal events are initiated in order to change the contents of awareness of personal existence. Potential victims regard their lives as having unacceptable values because their understanding of meanings converges on a self defined criteria for which death is preferable. As this convergence approaches congruence, the wish to return to an earlier more satisfying state is approximated by a wish to die. The facts of termination and the occurrence of a physical death are expected to change distressing awareness without causing cessation of all awareness. Even those who deny life after death will imply that nothing will feel better than the present situation. However, there is always a window of opportunity to introduce prevention efforts.

The authors believe that reliable and valid data of the present situation in an area will be beneficial in combating this very serious problem and establishing prevention programs.

**Suicide, Crete, Autopsy**