



## Pathology Biology Section – 2009

### G118 Homicide-Suicide in Tours France: 2000-2007

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about the characteristics of homicide-suicide in a French rural area in an eight-year period, as only one study on these events has been conducted in France.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by expanding knowledge of homicide-suicide in France. An important stage could be the creation of a national surveillance network, so that studies could be conducted over the whole country and over a long time span, allowing the possibility of preventive intervention.

**Introduction:** Homicide-suicide (HS) has been defined by a homicide committed by a person who subsequently commits suicide within one week of the homicide. These events are relatively uncommon but they have often drawn the media's attention. HS occupies a distinct epidemiological domain that overlaps with suicide and domestic homicide. Two major classifications have been proposed. Both are based on victim-offender relationship and motive. Few statewide studies of HS events have been conducted, but no data from France are available, except one Parisian study. This study of the characteristics of all HS in Tours, France during an eight-year period was compared with results obtained in other international studies.

**Material and Methods:** Case records of the Institute of Forensic Science of Tours were reviewed for 2000-2007. The age and sex of the perpetrator and victim, the relationship between them, the method of death, and the circumstances were noted.

**Results:** Sixteen HS involving a total of 33 decedents occurred during the 8-year period. It represents 11% of the total case of homicides within this period, for a population of 871,000 persons. All offenders were male, with a mean age of 68 years. In 11 events (68%), the offender used a rifle for both the homicide and suicide. Most victims were female (14/17), with a mean age of 64 years. Fourteen events occurred at home. Five were suicide pacts, during which one person killed the other before committing suicide. In these cases, a suicide note was always found.

**Discussion:** Data were similar to those obtained in other studies. The victim was often a female who was younger than the offender and her intimate partner. The most frequent apparent motive was the breakdown of the relationship. Suicide pacts were also frequent. Shooting was the most frequent used method of both homicide and suicide. Availability of firearms in this rural area of France can be explained by an important activity of hunting. The percentage of HS related to the total number of homicides was important and this result confirmed one epidemiological law of HS: the lower the homicide rate, the higher the percentage of HS. One limitation of study was the limited number of cases. However, a research strategy should be developed in France to expand knowledge of these events. A phase of this strategy could be the creation of a national surveillance network, as well as preventive interventions. **Homicide-Suicide, Suicide Pact, Amorous Jealousy**