

H145 An Autopsy Study of Suicidal Deaths — Trends in South India

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the epidemiology and pathology of suicidal deaths in India, their peculiarity, and the changing trends in the patterns of suicide.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by enhancing knowledge of suicide patterns prevalent in a developing country and how this pattern is different from other parts of the world.

Introduction: Suicide represents a huge human tragedy. Out of 1000 suicides a day in the world, more than 100 occur in the Indian subcontinent. In the span of ten years in India, death due to suicide increased by 62.9%, involving all age groups. Studies indicate that the suicide rates are greatly influenced by several variables, including in age, sex, race, religion, culture, marital status, and social systems. Therefore, this study is an attempt to analyze the recent trends in deliberate self-harm reported in the Manipal region of South India.

Materials and Methods: The present study was retrospective (January 1992-December 2016) over a span of 24 years conducted at the department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology at Kasturba Medical College Manipal, South India. Relevant data regarding the suicides was gathered from the autopsy files maintained in the department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, police inquest reports, and hospital case records.

Results: A total 4,970 cases were autopsied during this period in the department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology at Kasturba Medical College, of which 894 (18%) were cases of Fatal Deliberate Self-Harm (FDSH) or suicide. The incidence of FDSH was greater in the 21-30-year age group and lowest in the age group of less than 10 years and more than 60 years. Males (66.5%) outnumbered females in this study. The male:female ratio was 2:1. The majority of the suicide victims were married (57.3%). Most of the victims of FDSH belonged to the Hindu religion (86.95%) and 75% of the decedents of FDSH had no any history of illness. Twenty-five percent of the victims of FDSH had a history of physical and mental illness ranging from hypertension, diabetes, and carcinoma to schizophrenia and depression. Despair of life in addition to financial constraints (79.0%) was the most common motive for the victims of FDSH. The most common method used for FDSH was chemical (74.2%). The most common physical method adopted was hanging (15.6%). Among poisonings, organophosphorus compounds were most commonly used and a changing trend of poisoning with paraquate was observed.

Conclusion: The findings of this study are in accordance with various works, not only in India, but in studies conducted worldwide in developing countries.

Forensic Science, Forensic Pathology, Suicide