

Characteristics of Suicidal Patients Admitted to the Emergency Unit; Retrospective Study on the First Attempt and Repetition of Suicide Attempt

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Abstract : Background: More than 30,000 people died from suicide every year for the last decade in Japan. The actual situations of suicidal behaviours in this country, however, have not been revealed sufficiently yet. The authors conducted a study on suicide attempts among the patients admitted to the emergency and critical care centre of Fukuoka University Hospital, which is located in an urban area of Japan.

Objective: To investigate the characteristics of the first attempters and repeaters, and to find the clues of the primary prevention and secondary prevention of suicide attempt.

Subject and method: There were 115 suicidal patients admitted to this centre from April 2006 to December 2007. Of those 115, we investigated 78 attempters by interviewing them or gathering the information from their family, associates and the patients' physicians. We also evaluated suicide intent, dissociative symptoms and impulsivity by using Suicide Intent Scale (SIS), Dissociative Experiences Scale (J-DES), Barratt Impulsiveness Scale, 11th version (BIS-11).

Results: Of 78 subjects, 39 subjects had performed suicidal actions for the first time, and 39 subjects had previous attempts. Over half of the whole subjects had risk factors of single, separated, widowed, divorced (59%), unemployed (67%), and no history of psychiatric treatments (65%). As for the situation of each suicide attempt, 59% of them had nobody around and 72% did not call for help. The average points of SIS were the following: objective part of SIS (SIS-I) 6.34, and subjective part (SIS-II) 8.65. The average points of J-DES (N=50) and BIS-11 (N=50) were 15.5 and 52.5 respectively.

Dividing into the first attempters and repeaters, characteristic demographic data of each group was the following:

The first attempters had the tendency to be middle-aged and older (over 45-year-old, 56%), male (54%). Over half of them had no history of psychiatric treatments (56%), and diagnoses of mood disorder (33%) and neurotic disorder (36%) were prevalent in them.

Whilst repeaters were prevalent in under 45-year-old (77%), female (79%), unemployed (85%) patients. Mood disorder (33%) and personality disorder diagnoses (28%) were common. Sixty-two per cent of them repeated suicidal action within one year from previous attempt, and up to 72 per cent within two years.

Conclusions: Some different characteristics were found between the first attempters and repeaters. This data on characteristics of severe suicide attempters may be useful for the primary prevention and the secondary prevention of suicide attempt.

Key words : Suicide Attempt, Suicide Prevention, Emergency Medicine, Repetition of Suicide Attempt, Retrospective Study