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Étude rétrospective sur les patients hospitalisés ayant des antécédents de tentative de suicide, décédés à l'hôpital psychiatrique ou général en Indre et Loire : facteurs associés au suicide à l'hôpital

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Résumé

Étude rétrospective sur les patients hospitalisés ayant des antécédents de tentative de suicide, décédés à l'hôpital psychiatrique ou général en Indre et Loire : facteurs associés au suicide à l'hôpital

Introduction : Le suicide dans les établissements de santé représenterait 5 à 6,5 % des suicides : 3 à 5,5 % survenant en hôpital psychiatrique et environ 2 % en hôpital général¹. Cependant, les facteurs associés au décès par suicide dans un établissement de santé et les spécificités cliniques de ces patients sont peu explorés.

Méthode : Cette phase pilote s'inscrit dans une étude rétrospective multi-centrique d'envergure régionale. Les 60 dossiers des patients inclus sont ceux hospitalisés de janvier 2009 à décembre 2018 dans un service de Psychiatrie ou un service MCO (Médecine-Chirurgie-Obstétrique) au CHRU de TOURS et sur le CH du Chinonais, décédés pendant leur séjour d'hospitalisation (mode de sortie 9), qui avaient aussi des antécédents de tentative de suicide (code CIM-10 en X associé).

Résultats : Les patients décédés par suicide à l'hôpital souffraient de pathologies psychiatriques (78% vs. 42%, $p=0.004$) et avaient un trouble de l'usage d'Alcool (TUA) (39%, $p=0.04$). Ces patients ne bénéficiaient pas de diagnostic de pathologie invalidante (58% vs 87%, $p=0.02$), ni de mesure de protection juridique (28% vs.54%, $p=0.03$) et ils étaient autonomes (72%, $p=0.01$). Les moyens de suicide les plus fréquents étaient la pendaison et la strangulation (44%). Chez 69% des patients suicidés l'évaluation du risque suicidaire manquait, même dans les services de Psychiatrie.

Conclusion : Les services de Psychiatrie sont plus touchés par le suicide que les services MCO. Les patients les plus à risque semblent être ceux souffrant d'une pathologie psychiatrique aiguë (78%) et ayant un TUA. L'absence de diagnostic de handicap et de mesure de protection indiquent que les patients qui entrent dans les soins sont plus à risque de décès par suicide à l'hôpital et nécessitent une évaluation systématique du risque suicidaire ainsi qu'une surveillance clinique plus rapprochée.

Mots clés : suicide – patient – hospitalisation - trouble psychiatrique - trouble de l'usage - évaluation du risque suicidaire.

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A Retrospective study on patients with a personal history of suicide attempt that died in Psychiatric or General care facilities in Indre et Loire: associated factors with inpatient suicide

Presented in front of this thesis committee the 15 October 2019:

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Abstract

A Retrospective study on patients with a personal history of suicide attempt that died in Psychiatric or General care facilities in Indre-et-Loire: associated factors with inpatients suicide

Introduction: Suicide in medical and psychiatric departments represents 5 to 6.5% of suicides: 3 to 5.5% happening in psychiatric wards and approximately 2% in general hospitals. Nevertheless, factors associated with death by suicide in hospital settings and clinical profile of these patients are little explored.

Method: This pilot phase is part of a retrospective multi-centric study of regional scale. The 60 patients included are those with a personal history of suicide attempt (associated ICD X-code) that were hospitalized from January 2009 to December 2018 in a Psychiatric or General care Hospital at the Centre Hospitalier Regional Universitaire (CHRU) de Tours and the Centre Hospitalier du Chinonais (CHC) that died during their stay (exit mode 9).

Results: Patients that died by suicide suffered from mental disorders (78% vs. 42%, $p=0.004$) and had a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) (39%, $p=0.04$). These patients were self-sustaining (72%, $p=0.01$), didn't had a diagnosis of invalidating condition (58% vs 87%, $p=0.02$), nor a tutelage or guardianship measure (28% vs.54%, $p=0.03$). Most frequently employed suicide methods were hanging and strangulation (44%). Suicidal risk assessment was missing in 69% of the patients that died by suicide, even in Psychiatric departments.

Conclusion: Psychiatric departments are more frequently concerned by suicide than General care departments. At-risk patients for death by suicide at the hospital seem to be those suffering from an acute mental disorder (78%) and having a SUD. Absence of a disability diagnosis and absence of guardianship measures show that patients entering the healthcare system have a high risk for death by suicide at the hospital, need a systematic suicide risk evaluation and a close clinical monitoring.

Keywords: suicide – inpatient – hospital - mental disorder - substance use disorder- suicide risk assessment.

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SERMENT D'HIPPOCRATE

En présence des Maîtres de cette Faculté,
de mes chers condisciples
et selon la tradition d'Hippocrate,
je promets et je jure d'être fidèle aux lois de l'honneur
et de la probité dans l'exercice de la Médecine.

Je donnerai mes soins gratuits à l'indigent,
et n'exigerai jamais un salaire au-dessus de mon travail.
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les secrets qui me seront confiés et mon état ne servira pas
à corrompre les mœurs ni à favoriser le crime.

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l'instruction que j'ai reçue de leurs pères.

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et méprisé de mes confrères
si j'y manque.

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LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

APEX: Association de Promotion des Expérimentations Sociales

AUD : Alcohol Use Disorder

CER-TP : Centre D'Éthique pour les Recherches impliquant la personne humaine des Universités de Tours et Poitiers

CIM-10 : 10^e révision de la Classification internationale statistique des maladies et des problèmes de santé connexes

CHC : Centre Hospitalier du Chinonais

CHRU : Centre Hospitalier Régional Universitaire

CI : Correspondant Informatique et Libertés

ICD-10: 10th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems

MCO : Service de Médecine Chirurgie et Obstétrique

SUD : Substance Use Disorder

UREH : Unité Régionale d'épidémiologie Hospitalière en Région Centre

I. INTRODUCTION

Suicide is a major public health issue with up to 800 000 deaths every year and the second leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds. A prior suicide attempt is the single most important risk factor for suicide in the general population. Ingestion of pesticide and hanging are among the most common methods of suicide globally (1,2). The main completed suicide risk factors are male and advanced age especially in men.

An essential risk factor for death by suicide is represented by psychiatric disorders, especially mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and substance use disorders (3, 4). The 2016 report on suicide indicates hospitalization for psychiatric inpatients, as a suicide risk factor, sign of a severe psychiatric disorder. For inpatients hospitalized for suicide attempt, mood disorders involve a high suicidal risk and an extreme risk the week following discharge from hospital. This pattern is also valid for inpatients suffering from schizophrenia (4). As to substance use disorders, the suicidal risk is highly increased in substance use disorders, particularly in alcohol use disorders (5,6) and seems to be stable over time (4). Scientific literature shows hanging as suicide methods most frequently employed by inpatients (7,8) with the most common ligature fixation points being a door, door handle, or door hinge (8) but also drowning (9) and jumping from a high place (10).

The sociology team APEX¹ conducted a literature review on the subject of suicide and disability (11). This research concerned several branches of this topic. One of them was suicide in psychiatric and medical care facilities. The data relating to suicide during hospitalization is rare and concerns most often the psychiatric hospitals, medical researchers involved in suicide and suicidology being frequently psychiatrists (12).

Although little explored (12) the epidemiological data on suicide in psychiatric and medical settings is relatively homogenous (13,14) and shows that suicide in inpatients reaches up to 5% of suicides, most frequently in psychiatric departments (between 3 and 5.5%) compared to general hospitals (approximately 2%). Moreover, according to several studies, 15 to 60 % of the inpatient population was initially hospitalized due to a high suicidal risk (13). These findings are at the origin of our questioning on the eventual profile of these patients and

¹ Association de Promotion des Expérimentations Sociales

motivated the launching of our exploratory study in order to understand the phenomenon in the department Indre-et-Loire.

This study's primary objective is to describe the factors associated with death by suicide in an inpatient population with a personal history of suicide attempt. Secondary aim is to draw an accurate profile of at-risk patients for death by suicide in medical and psychiatric care units. Our main hypothesis is that psychiatric disorders are a major suicide risk, particularly mood disorders and schizophrenia, and that first steps in the medical care systems are highly at risk of death by suicide. Another hypothesis is that substance use disorders are positively correlated to death by suicide in hospital facilities. Last hypothesis is that hanging may be the main suicide method given the context of hospitalization where access to cords, belts and wires seems to be much easier than medication that tends to be restrained.

As suicide in hospital settings is a largely unknown issue that affects psychiatry departments but also general hospital departments, we conducted this pilot and exploratory study to help us describe the factors associated with death by suicide in an inpatient population with a history of suicide attempt and better describe the clinical profile of inpatients that die by suicide in psychiatric and general departments.

II. METHODS

This is a retrospective, multicentric, pilot and exploratory study conducted in department Indre-et-Loire. The lack of scientific data justified an extensive data gathering, going from medical history to personal history of psychiatric disorders and history of substance use.

2.1. Population and procedure

Study population is represented by patients with a personal history of suicide attempt that died during hospital stay in a psychiatry unit or a general medicine unit, with a special attention accorded to patients that died by suicide during hospitalization. Recruited patients were those who died during hospitalization and whose stays were associated to an ICD-10 code for suicide attempt. The facilities concerned were general hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and rehabilitation and recuperative care facilities. The second step was to check the patient files to validate the data and proceed to the inclusion.

We retrospectively consulted all medical files of patients having a personal history of suicide attempt and that died during their inpatient stay in a general or a psychiatric hospital from 2009 until 2018. Were considered as inpatients all hospitalized patients in a general care unit, psychiatry ward but also patients out on hospital leaves and patients that have left the hospital for less than 48 hours. We excluded inpatient's medical file if death at hospital resulted from a suicide attempt at home, in a public area or if death was due to an accident. We also excluded medical files if there was missing data on the circumstances of death, meaning absence of information concerning an eventual suicide or accident.

2.2. Measures

a. Social and demographic data

We collected data on demographics (age, sex, marital status, children, current employment and retirement, educational degree) but also on daily living context (presence or absence of an active social circle, disability allowance, guardianship or tutelage measures, independence in their homes).

b. Personal history of psychiatric disorders

In this category will be indicated the personal and family history of mental disorders, which refer to conditions that affect cognition, emotion, behavior and social interactions.

The 2011 World Report on disability (15) defines disability as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors) (16). We used disability defined as a pathological state of physical, psychological or cognitive nature lasting at least 3 months (17), chronic illness being defined as longer than 1 year (18).

c. Ongoing psychiatric disorder

We recorded as ongoing disorder a condition that is not acute but still in course of evolution, having an impact on the patient everyday life and needing more specific care than a chronic stabilized condition.

d. Acute episodes of a psychiatric disorder

They are severe and sudden in onset. The history of acute episodes within the evolution of mental disorders are considered as leading to recovery or towards chronicity.

e. Personal history of substance use disorder

Personal history of substance use will include tobacco use, alcohol use, cannabis and opioids use. Family history of addiction will also be collected.

f. Type of care prior to suicide

The long-term hospitalizations, hospitalizations in the current year and in the month prior to suicide were collected. We also searched for recent psychiatric consultations in the public mental care facilities, issued within the last three months before the completed suicide.

g. Describing the completed suicide

The completed suicides were described by the presence of suicidal ideation, the suicide methods and place of completed suicide. We recorded personal and family history of suicidal behavior and described history of suicide attempts by number and suicide methods. The cases of suicidal behavior defined as suicidal equivalent were described. We considered as suicidal equivalent a refusal of food intake, care and treatment and behavior of voluntary risk taking as voluntary falls and opioid overdoses.

2.3. Launching of the research project

A research study was conducted and the feasibility of this study was evaluated before launching the project in cooperation with the UREH staff (Unité Régionale d'épidémiologie Hospitalière en Région Centre). The project was validated by an independent ethical committee (CER-TP, CER-2018-11-02). A declaration has been made to the French data protection authority (CIL) under the number 5413290819.

2.4. Statistics

All data was generated for all variables and statistical analysis *was performed* using SPSS software, version 22.0.0 and R software (R foundation for Statistical computing, 2012) and was tested with a two-sided significance level of .05.

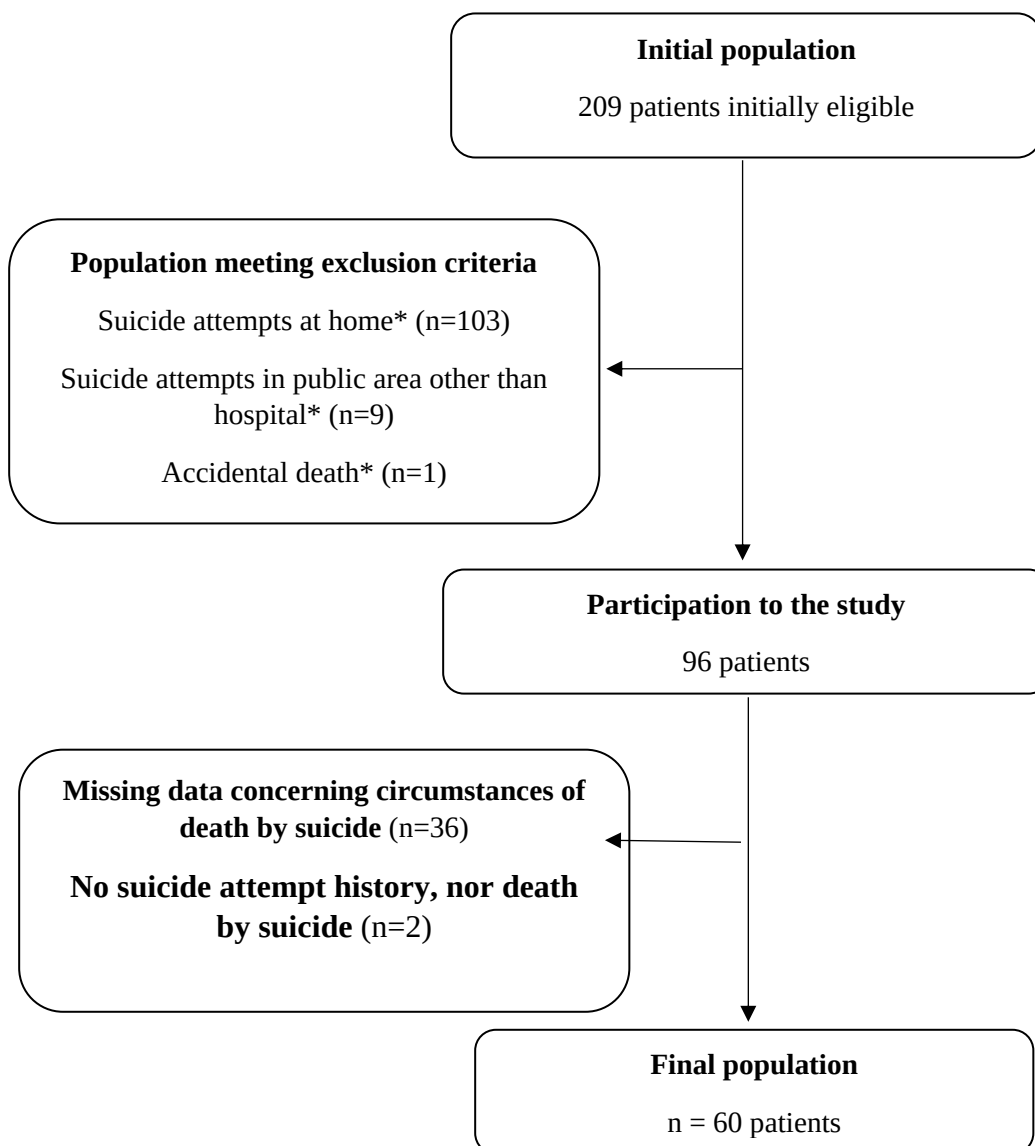
Descriptive statistics for quantitative measures (mean, standard deviation) and for qualitative measures (percentage) were first calculated. We used chi-squared to determine the association between inpatient's suicide and qualitative variables (sociodemographic, substance use, current and lifetime psychiatric and medical disorders, duration of hospitalization, recent consultation in psychiatry); we used Fisher exact test when appropriate. Parametric and non-parametric mean comparison tests (student's mean comparison tests or Mann-Whitney U test, depending on the normality of the variables) were also used to determine what continuous variables were associated with inpatient suicide.

III. RESULTS

3.1. Patients selection

As shown by the study flow chart in Figure 2.1, the initial population was represented by 209 patients. The excluded patients were those that committed suicide at home and died at the hospital (n=103 patients), those that committed suicide in public places other than the hospital as school or work (n=9) and one accidental death. Other 36 patients were excluded due to the lack of data concerning death circumstances. The final sample study is represented by 60 patients.

Figure 2.1. Study flow chart



*Note: *patients declared deceased in hospital; n = number of patients*

3.2. Descriptive Social and Demographic data

Table 3.1 shows that mean age of the study sample was 53.5 years old and 31 (51.7%) patients were male. Fifteen (25%) were in a relationship and 24 (40%) had children. On disability recognition, 24 patients (40%) were in receipt of the disabled adult allowance and 23 (38.3%) were under guardianship or tutelage measure.

Table 3.1 Descriptive statistics of social and demographic data of the study sample (n=60). Data is presented as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) or number (percentage).

	Study sample (n=60)
<i>Sociodemographics</i>	
Age, years	53.4 $\pm$ 18.0
Sex, male	31 (51.7%)
In relationship	15 (25.0%)
With children	24 (40%)
Active social circle	49 (81.7%)
Current or former employment	19 (31.7%)
Disabled adult allowance	24 (40.0%)
University entry level	24 (40.0%)
Independent in his/her own home	24 (40.0%)
<i>Hospitalization-related characteristics</i>	
Long-term hospitalization in a Psychiatric unit	18 (30.0%)
Hospitalization in Psychiatric unit in the last month	23 (43.3%)
Recent consultation in a Psychiatric emergency unit	22 (36.7%)
Suicide attempt related hospitalization in General Medicine	11 (18.3%)
Hospitalization in a Psychiatric unit	54 (90%)
Psychotic episode	14 (23.3%)
Depressive episode	13 (21.7%)
Bipolar disorder	11 (18.3%)
Suicidal ideation and suicide attempts	12 (20.0%)
<i>Type of admission in a Psychiatric unit</i>	
Voluntary admission in a Psychiatric unit	43 (71.7%)
Involuntary admission in a Psychiatric unit	11 (18.3%)

As to hospitalization-related characteristics, 18 patients (30%) were in a long-term hospitalization in a psychiatric ward. Twenty-three patients (43.3%) were hospitalized in a psychiatric ward in the last month and 22 (36.7%) have had a consultation in a psychiatric emergency unit in the past 3 months.

Fifty-four (90%) out the 60 patients were hospitalized in a Psychiatry unit. The main admission reasons were a psychotic episode (14, 23.3%), a depressive episode (13, 21.7%) and a depressive or mixed episode in the context of a bipolar disorder (11, 18.3%).

Table 3.2 Descriptive statistics of the medical history data of the study sample (n=60). Data is presented as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) or mean (percentage)-.

	Study sample (n=60)
<i>Medical History</i>	
Number of morbidities	3.0 $\pm$ 2.4
Medical history (at least 1 ongoing or in remission pathology)	52 (86.7%)
Acute illness at the moment of suicide	21 (35.0%)
Disability (mental and/or physical)	42 (70.0%)
<i>Death-related characteristics</i>	
Non-suicide related cause of death	24 (40.0%)
Suicide-related or suicidal behavior cause of death	36 (60.0%)
<i>Suicide-related characteristics</i>	
Suicide committed in a Psychiatric unit	27 (45.0%)
Suicide committed in General Hospital	9 (15.0%)
Suicidal equivalent behavior concluding in death in a Psychiatric Unit	2 (3.3%)
Suicidal equivalent behavior concluding in death in General Hospital	4 (6.7%)

On the subject of death-related characteristics, on the final sample of 60 patients: 36 (60%) had died by suicide or suicide equivalent at the hospital, and 24 (40%) died due to a non-suicide-related cause. In a matter of suicide-related characteristics, 27 (45%) had committed suicide in a psychiatric unit and nine (15%) in a general care unit.

Six patients (10%) had a suicidal equivalent behavior leading to death. All were hospitalized in a psychiatry unit. The mean age was 66 years old (4 women and 2 men). Three were suffering from a bipolar disorder, two were suffering from schizophrenia and one from a late-onset psychotic disorder.

Nine patients died by suicide in a general care unit. The average age was 61.7 years old (4 women, 4 men). Four suffered from an alcohol use disorder and two had a tobacco use disorder. Also, the latter two reports suffered from a pulmonary cancer with metastasis. Three of the patients were experiencing a depressive episode and one was diagnosed with a histrionic personality disorder.

Table 3.3. Descriptive statistics of psychiatric history of the study sample (n=60). Data is presented as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) or number (percentage).

	Study sample (n=60)
<i>Psychiatric history</i>	
Current psychiatric disorder	54 (90.0%)
Acute psychiatric disorder	38 (63.3%)
Chronic psychiatric disorder	43 (71.7%)
Schizophrenia	15 (25.0%)
Depressive episode	14 (23.3%)
Bipolar disorder	12 (20.0%)
Autistic spectrum disorder, neurodevelopmental disorder	6 (10.0%)
Anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder	3 (5.0%)
Post-traumatic stress disorder	1 (1.7%)
Personality disorder	4 (6.7%)
Other psychotic disorders (late onset, pharmacopsychosis)	5 (8.3%)
<i>History of Substance Use Disorder</i>	
Personal history of substance use disorder	24 (40.0%)
Family history of substance use disorder	1 (1.7%)
Mental disorder due to psychoactive substance use in the past 12 months	13 (21.7%)
Alcohol abuse	17 (28.3%)
Tobacco abuse	22 (36.7%)

About history of substance use disorder (SUD) we find twenty-four patients (40.0%) with a personal history of SUD. Tobacco was found to be the most frequently used substance with 22 patients i.e. 36.7%. The second substance most frequently used was alcohol and concerned 17 patients (28.3%).

3.3. Analysis and comparison of collected data connected to death versus death by suicide

The essential differentiating element of our comparison was the cause of death: related or non-related to a suicide attempt. The two groups were comparable with regard to sex with 12 (50%) and 19 (53%) male patients in the non-suicide related versus suicide-related death groups.

On disability Table 3.4 shows a significant difference ($p = 0.02$) between the two groups: 21 patients had a disability (87%) in the non-suicide related group while in the suicide related group 21 patients suffered from disability (58%). In the non-suicide related death group, 13 patients (54%) were in receipt of a guardianship or a tutelage measure and 10 patients (28%) had a guardianship in the death by suicide group ($p=0.03$).

Table 3.4 Comparison of social and demographic data, medical and substance use history connected to death and death by suicide presented as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) or number (percentage).

	Non suicide related death N=24	Death by suicide N=36	Test	P
<i>Social and demographic data</i>				
Sex, male	12 (50%)	19 (53%)	$\chi^2=.44$	.83
In Relationship	5 (21%)	10 (28%)	$\chi^2=.37$	.54
With children	8 (33%)	16 (66%)	$\chi^2=.74$	.38
Active social circle	19 (79%)	30 (83%)	$\chi^2=.16$	.68
Current or former employment	6 (25%)	13 (36%)	$\chi^2=.82$	.36
Disabled adult allowance	13 (54%)	11 (31%)	$\chi^2=3.74$	.15
Guardianship or tutelage measure	13 (54%)	10 (28%)	$\chi^2=4.24$	.03*
Independent in his/her own home	10 (42%)	26 (72%)	$\chi^2=5.60$	.01*
Disability (mental and/ or physical)	21 (87%)	21 (58%)	$\chi^2=5.8$	.02*

*We have compared average chi-squared tests for quantity variables. When $n < 5$, we have used Fisher exact test. * means presence of a significant statistical difference ($p < .05$)*

As seen in Table 3.4, 26 out of 36 patients (72%) in the suicide related death group were independent in their homes while in the other group 42% (10 out of 24 patients) were autonomous in their household (p value of 0.01).

Table 3.5 illustrates that acute psychiatric disorder affected 86% of the patients (31 out of 36) in the suicide related death group versus 42 % patients (10 out of 24) in the non-suicide related group ($p=0.004$). Chronic psychiatric disorder was more frequent in the non-suicide related death group with 88% of the patients versus only 61% in the other group ($p=0.04$).

Table 3.5 Comparison of psychiatric and substance use history presented as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) or number (percentage).

	Non suicide related death N=24	Death by suicide N=36	Test	P
<i>Psychiatric History</i>				
Current psychiatric disorder	23 (96%)	31 (86%)	$\chi^2=1.51$	.38
Acute psychiatric disorder	10 (42%)	28 (78%)	$\chi^2=8.08$	.004*
Chronic psychiatric disorder	21 (88%)	22 (61%)	$\chi^2=4.93$	.04*
<i>History of Substance Use Disorder</i>				
Personal history of SUD	8 (33%)	16 (44%)	$\chi^2=.74$	.38
Mental disorder due to psychoactive substance use in the past 12 months	2 (8%)	11 (31%)	$\chi^2=4.19$	.05
Alcohol Use Disorder	3 (13%)	14 (39%)	$\chi^2=4.93$	.04*
Tobacco Use Disorder	9 (38%)	13 (36%)	$\chi^2=.012$	.91
Cannabis Use Disorder	1 (4%)	4 (11%)	$\chi^2=.90$	.63
Opioids Use Disorder	1 (4%)	2 (6%)	$\chi^2=.05$	1.00

*We have compared average chi-squared tests for quantity variables. When $n < 5$, we have used Fisher exact test. * means presence of a significant statistical difference ($p < .05$)*

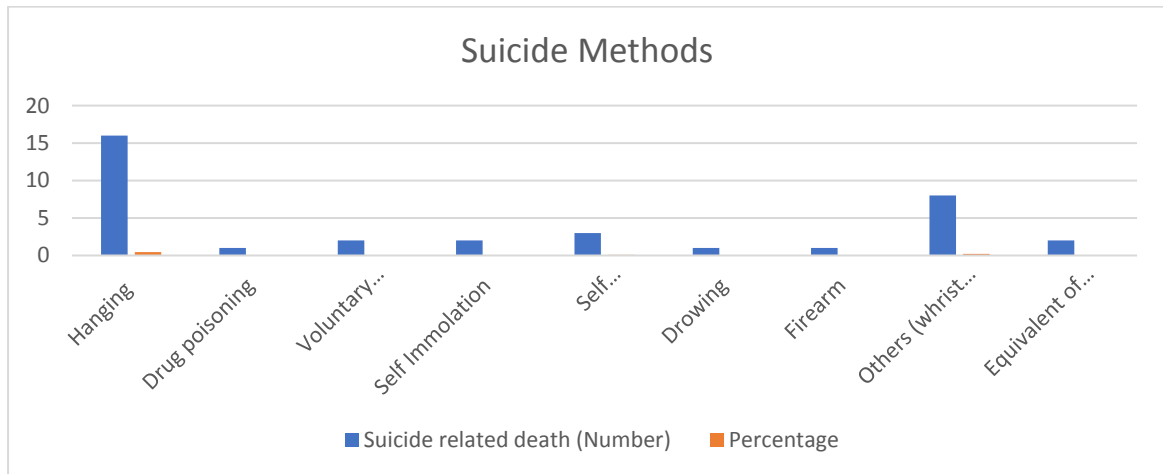
Table 3.5 shows that in the suicide related group there were 14 patients (39%) suffering from an alcohol use disorder (AUD) versus three patients (13%) in the non-suicide related group ($p=0.04$). In table 3.6 we see that 83% of the patients that died by suicide were not hospitalized for a long-term stay (less than 6 months) versus 50% on the non-suicide related death group ($p=0.006$). In the suicide related group, the most frequent reason of hospitalization was depressive episode with a 28% (10 out of 36 patients), followed by depressive episode or mixed state in the context of bipolar disorder and psychotic episode with 6 patients out of 36 (17%).

Table 3.6 Comparison of hospitalization connected variables presented as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) or number (percentage)

	Non suicide related death N=24	Death by suicide N=36	Test	P
<i>Hospitalization-related characteristics</i>				
Suicide attempt related hospitalization in General Medicine	1 (4%)	12 (33%)	$\chi^2=7.21$	.009*
Psychotic Episode	8 (33%)	6 (17%)	$\chi^2=2.23$	.13
Depressive Episode	3 (13%)	10 (28%)	$\chi^2=1.98$	.21
Bipolar Disorder	5 (21%)	6 (17%)	$\chi^2=.16$	.68
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	5 (21%)	1 (3%)	$\chi^2=5.2$	.03*
Anxiety Disorder	1 (4%)	2 (6%)	$\chi^2=.05$	1.00
Other Psychotic Disorder	3 (13%)	1 (3%)	$\chi^2=.98$	.29
Behavioral Disturbances	6 (25%)	3 (8%)	$\chi^2=3.13$	.13
Involuntary admission in a Psychiatric unit	2 (8%)	9 (25%)	$\chi^2=2.67$	.17
No long-term hospitalization in a Psychiatric unit ¹	12 (50%)	30 (83%)	$\chi^2=7.61$	.006*
No hospitalization in a Psychiatry unit in the last year	14 (58%)	24 (67%)	$\chi^2=.43$	.51
Hospitalization in a Psychiatry unit in the past month	9 (38%)	17 (47%)	$\chi^2=.55$	.45
Recent admission in a Psychiatric emergency unit	8 (33%)	14 (39%)	$\chi^2=.19$	.66

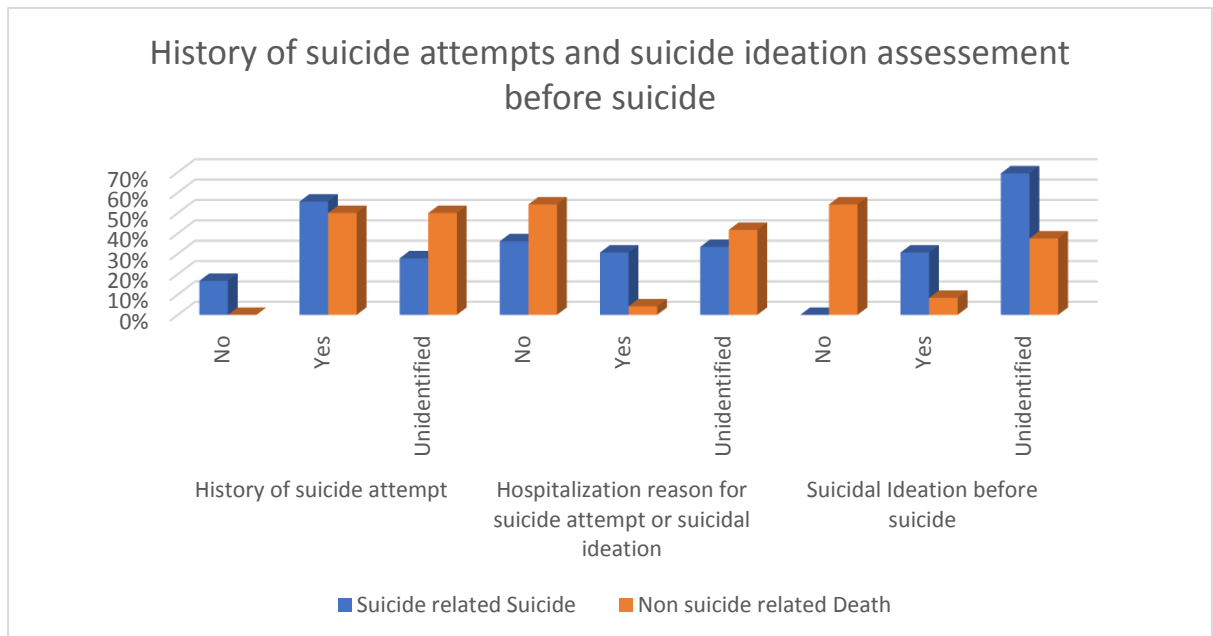
*We have compared average chi-squared tests for quantity variables. When $n < 5$, we have used Fisher exact test. * means presence of a significant statistical difference ($p < .05$)*

The most frequent suicide methods were hanging and strangulation with a 44% (16 out of 36 patients) followed by other methods that included wrist cutting and asphyxiation (22%) and closely followed by self-defenestration with three patients out of 36 (8%).



Graphic 3.1. Suicide methods in suicide related death group

In the second graphic we can observe that history of suicide attempts and suicide ideation is marked by the presence of unidentified information.



Graphic 3.2. History of suicide attempt and suicide ideation assesment before suicide. Unidentified presence of suicidal ideation in 69% i.e. 25 out of 36 among patients that died by suicide at the hospital.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study shows that patients that commit suicide at the hospital: are slightly younger, self-sustaining, without a disabled adult allowance and without any guardianship or tutelage measure. The comparison of the two groups reveals an interesting aspect about disability. In the suicide related death group, disability seems to be less frequent than in the non-suicide related death group. Furthermore, the recognition of disability is also lesser in the suicide related death group. A possible explanation for this might be that death by suicide at the hospital is more common for inpatients that have not received global and adapted care to their condition. All these findings seem to indicate that entering healthcare system is associated with higher suicidal risk as prior research indicates (2,19,20).

A consensus is established saying that psychiatric disorders are one of the main suicidal risk factors (21–23). The distribution of acute versus chronic diseases in the two groups puts more emphasis on this aspect. In the group of patients that died by suicide 28 patients (78%) were suffering of an acute psychiatric disorder versus 10 (42%) on the non-suicide related group. Nevertheless, we must remember that both our groups are characterized by a personal history of suicide attempt and mental disorders are more frequent in this population (24). As expected, we found that in our sample study, among patients that died by suicide one third suffered from a depressive episode, followed by psychotic episode and bipolar disorder (13,25). Depression and bipolar disorder have a higher suicidal risk compared to general population (2,26). Martelli *et al.* (13) identified mood disorders (39-45 %) and schizophrenia (27-47 %) as the most frequent disorders in psychiatric inpatients that die by suicide. Schizophrenia is particularly concerned by suicide at the hospital: 50% of schizophrenia patients that die by suicide commit suicide during hospitalization.

As to suicide timeline during inpatient stays, several studies indicate as high risk periods of suicidal behaviors the first week of hospitalization and the two to three weeks after the discharge from a psychiatric department (1,8,29). The operational expertise on psychological autopsy (30) evaluates that 4 to 5% of deaths by suicide occur during the hospitalization and 10 to 15% occur on the 4 weeks following discharge. Unfortunately, the design of our study was not suited to explore clinical trajectory.

Factors associated with hospital suicide were AUD, patients that were not in receipt of a guardianship measure nor had a disability allowance. This data suggests that patients

committing suicide in hospital settings are those that have not been treated in the past. According to Rousset & Vacheron (27), suicidal risk increases for patients that are hospitalized frequently (28) and for short periods of time, but also with the number of involuntary admissions (13,27). Our findings are in agreement with previous studies as in the suicide related death group 47% had been hospitalized in the past month and 39% have had a consultation at the psychiatric emergency unit in the past three months. Also, the majority of patients that died by suicide were not hospitalized for a long-term stay (less than 6 months).

With regard to substance use, AUD seems to be a common disorder among patients that died by suicide in the hospital settings with a significant difference: 39% suffered from an AUD versus only 13% in the other group. This finding confirms our hypothesis and is consistent with former studies (5,6). Concerning tobacco use, two aspects need to be discussed: we have only 36% smokers on the suicide related group and 38% in the non-suicide related death group. Smoking prevalence increases with a greater number of mental disorders, ranging from 18% for people with no mental illness to 61% for people diagnosed with 3 or more mental disorders (31). Leonard et al. (32) shows an incidence of smoking of approximately 60% overall in individuals suffering of mental disorder, with schizophrenia showing the highest severity level of smoking (33). Mental illness is associated with heavier smoking, greater nicotine dependence, greater withdrawal symptoms when quitting, and lower quit rates (34–38). Unidentified information of tobacco use was considered as a negative response. In this context, we may consider that tobacco use which is generally frequent in psychiatric inpatients might have been underestimated. This underestimation may be linked to a tendency to trivialize tobacco use leading to an absence of data. Globally, SUD have been identified as a suicide risk factor and the presence of AUD as well as tobacco use in the suicide related death group is consistent with previous studies (39,40). However, before comparing to former studies caution is necessary because not all studies were exclusively referring to hospitalized patients.

An intriguing finding is that assessment of suicidal ideation was unidentified in 69% of patients that died by suicide at the hospital. This situation raises an important question regarding suicidal ideation assessment even in psychiatry units and even after admission. Therefore, we may say that the absence of systematic evaluation of suicidal ideation and personal history of suicidal behavior creates the conditions of overlooking an at-risk patient and insufficient suicide assessment may be seen as a suicidal risk factor. Martelli et al. (13) identified underestimation of suicide risk as a factor associated with suicide in medical care facilities along with availability of suicide methods, insufficient monitoring, absence of

intensive care unit and insufficient communication between medical and paramedical staff. In the same vein, Santarelli (25) indicates as one of the most important prevention methods an accurate assessment of suicidal risk along with removing access to suicide methods (41), staff training and communication between intervening parties.

Another hypothesis concerned suicide methods employed in hospital setting. Our findings confirm hanging and strangulation as the most frequent suicide methods. Nevertheless former studies are contradictory: most of them finding hanging as most frequent (7,8) while other find drowning as first method of suicide (9) or jumping from high places (10). One possible explanation would be the absence of bathtubs in our psychiatry wards, the long distance to rivers, lakes or high places and the easier access to wires or belts.

As to suicide in general hospital, literature gives a special attention to oncology departments. The literature review of Lefetz & Reich (44) identified suicide risk factors also found in general population, to which are added risk factors specific to oncology: partially relieved on non-relieved pain, presence of various symptoms (nausea, vomiting, dyspnea that may be treatment side-effects) or evolution of the disease towards a negative prognosis. The tumor location (lung, upper airways, pancreas, central nervous system) may also represent a risk factor for death by suicide. Several former studies (13,42,43) shed the light on the role of certain physical conditions, most frequently cancers in terminal phase but also chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and the neurological conditions such as Huntington disease or multiple sclerosis. The interpretation of the data from the literature review must be contextualized given the recent improvement in the prognosis of many diseases. Another important aspect is that personal psychiatric history is rarely mentioned in inpatients files hospitalized in general care units which highlights the possibility of comorbid psychiatric disorders (most frequently mood disorders) that have not been diagnosed due to a poor rate of psychiatric evaluation during the hospitalization. In our small sample study, 22% of the patients committed suicide in a general care unit. Among these patients, two suffered from a metastatic lung cancer, fact that seems to accord with some of the previous studies (44), while other found the gastrointestinal localization as most at-risk (45).

In oncology, suicidal ideation may be expressed by complex requests such demanding stronger analgesics, euthanasia or medically assisted suicide. These requests lead towards ethical debates about death and the status of the dying patient that are beyond the object our study.

The main strength of our study was the large data collecting from sociodemographic to medical and psychiatric history that allowed us to explore several hypotheses. Another strength was the close look we decided to give to disability in our data research. This approach was oriented by our initial literature review conducted with our collaborators from APEX. This particular regard allowed us to highlight the beginning of the trajectory into the psychiatric health system as an at-risk moment for death by suicide in hospital settings.

There are several limits for our study. Firstly, the initial goal was to find the suicide prevalence in Indre-et-Loire hospitals. A confirmation of the literature review concerning the prevalence of suicide inpatients was difficult to run. This would have implied a more extensive collection of data with a registration of all deaths in medical and psychiatric care units on a given period. Second of all, we have conducted a pilot and retrospective study of an exploratory nature. Due to the fact that information was determined by retrospective examination of case notes, numerous details were lacking. Furthermore, the less recent inpatient files were very poor in social, demographic data but also personal history of medical and psychiatric disorders, probably linked to the fact that inpatient files were not yet digitalized. Another limit is the small sample study and the presence of a personal history of suicide attempt in all patients that obstructed our possibility to compare this variable.

The absence of information was frequently an obstacle in the process of data collecting. The absence social and demographic data was registered as a negative response. The only data maintained as unknown and considered as clinically significant in this form was data regarding suicidal ideation assessment.

The main clinical implication concerns the importance of systematic suicide risk assessment in psychiatry and general care facilities. A particular attention and management are needed for those who are experiencing first episodes of a psychiatric disorder and entering the health system. Priorities are to limit access to suicide methods and working closely with and training paramedical staff to assess suicidal risk. Concrete measures as standardized trainings could also improve suicidal crisis management and prevention.

The research perspective that we imagine is a prospective multicentric study conducted on an extended period of time. A prospective study would allow a more accurate data collecting. That could also be associated to a psychological autopsy research to obtain a complete picture of inpatients suicidal behavior timeline in their life trajectories.

V. CONCLUSION

Suicide rate in medical and psychiatric care facilities is low but not insignificant. In spite of our small sample size, the main finding that should be considered is that patients entering the healthcare system as more at risk for suicide. Another important point emphasizes the need of a standardized suicide risk assessment even during hospitalization. Further research is needed for a more accurate comparison of suicide risk factors in general and psychiatric hospital.

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Résumé substantiel

Étude rétrospective sur les patients hospitalisés ayant des antécédents de tentative de suicide, décédés à l'hôpital psychiatrique ou général en Indre et Loire : facteurs associés au suicide à l'hôpital

Introduction : Le suicide dans les établissements de santé représenterait 5 à 6,5 % des suicides : 3 à 5,5 % survenant en hôpital psychiatrique et environ 2 % en hôpital général. L'objectif principal de cette étude était de mettre en évidence les facteurs associés à la mort par suicide dans une population avec des antécédents de tentatives de suicide.

L'objectif secondaire était de décrire le profil des patients à risque de décès par suicide à l'hôpital. L'hypothèse principale était que les troubles psychiatriques sont un facteur de risque important en particulier les troubles de l'humeur et la schizophrénie. L'entrée dans le parcours de soins représente aussi un moment à risque de décès par suicide et les troubles de l'usage sont corrélés positivement à la mort par suicide. Notre dernière hypothèse concernait le moyen de suicide par pendaison comme moyen le plus fréquent. Malgré ce tableau, les facteurs associés au décès par suicide dans un établissement de santé et les spécificités cliniques de ces patients restent peu explorés.

Méthode : Cette phase pilote s'inscrit dans une étude rétrospective multi-centrique d'envergure régionale. Les 60 dossiers des patients inclus sont ceux hospitalisés de janvier 2009 à décembre 2018 dans un service de Psychiatrie ou un service MCO (Médecine-Chirurgie-Obstétrique) au CHRU de TOURS et sur le CH du Chinonais, décédés pendant leur séjour d'hospitalisation (mode de sortie 9), qui avaient aussi des antécédents de tentative de suicide (code CIM-10 en X associé). Le recueil des données a concerné : les données socio-démographiques, les antécédents psychiatriques personnels et familiaux, l'évolution du trouble psychiatrique (aigu, actuel ou chronique), les antécédents personnels et familiaux de troubles de l'usage, le type de prise en charge avant le suicide et la description du suicide abouti.

Résultats : Les patients décédés par suicide à l'hôpital souffraient de pathologies psychiatriques (78% vs. 42%, $p=0.004$) et avaient un trouble de l'usage d'Alcool (TUA) (39%, $p=0.04$). Ces patients ne bénéficiaient pas de diagnostic de pathologie invalidante (58% vs 87%, $p=0.02$), ni de mesure de protection juridique (28% vs.54%, $p=0.03$) et ils étaient autonomes (72%, $p=0.01$). Les moyens de suicide les plus fréquents étaient la pendaison et la strangulation (44%). Dans le groupe des suicidés le motif d'hospitalisation les plus fréquent

était l'épisode dépressif (28%), suivi par l'épisode dépressif ou mixte dans le cadre du trouble bipolaire et la schizophrénie (17% des patients pour chaque trouble). Chez 69% des patients suicidés l'évaluation du risque suicidaire manquait, même dans les services de Psychiatrie.

Discussion : Les patients à risque de décès par suicide semblent être légèrement plus jeunes, autonomes, sans diagnostic de pathologie invalidante et sans mesure de protection juridique. Le handicap et la reconnaissance du handicap sont moins fréquents dans le groupe des suicidés ce qui incite à penser que les patients à risque de décès par suicide à l'hôpital sont ceux qui n'ont pas bénéficié d'une prise en charge globale et adaptée de leur trouble. Ces données semblent orienter vers l'idée que l'entrée dans les soins est associée à un risque de décès par suicide. Les troubles psychiatriques représentent des facteurs de risque de suicide et les patients qui souffrent de troubles de l'humeur et de schizophrénie semblent être plus touchés par le décès par suicide à l'hôpital. Les troubles de l'usage les plus fréquentes concernaient l'alcool et le tabac, substances associées dans la littérature à un risque élevé de passage à l'acte suicidaire et de décès par suicide.

La pendaison et la strangulation sont retrouvées comme moyens les plus commun dans notre étude, l'explication possible étant l'accès facile à des cordes ou ceintures et l'éloignement de rivières et d'endroits élevés, la noyade ou la précipitation étant citées comme moyens fréquents dans d'autres études.

Limites : L'absence des données a été souvent un obstacle dans le recueil des données. L'absence de données a été enregistré comme négative à l'exception de l'évaluation du risque suicidaire, notée comme non-renseignée, intéressante cliniquement dans cette forme.

Perspectives : Des études prospectives multicentriques réalisées sur une période étendue permettraient un recueil des données plus précis. Une étude de type autopsie psychologique pourrait être associée afin de mieux comprendre le comportement suicidaire du patient dans sa trajectoire de vie.

Conclusion : Les services de Psychiatrie sont plus touchés que les services de MCO. Les patients les plus à risque semblent être ceux souffrant d'une pathologie psychiatrique aigüe (78%) et ayant un TUA. L'absence de diagnostic de handicap et de mesure de protection indiquent que les patients qui entrent dans les soins sont plus à risque de décès par suicide à l'hôpital et nécessitent une évaluation systématique du risque suicidaire ainsi qu'une surveillance clinique plus rapprochée.

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Résumé

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Introduction : Le suicide dans les établissements de santé représenterait 5 à 6,5 % des suicides : 3 à 5,5 % survenant en hôpital psychiatrique et environ 2 % en hôpital général¹. Cependant, les facteurs associés au décès par suicide dans un établissement de santé et les spécificités cliniques de ces patients sont peu explorés.

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Mots clés : suicide – patient – hospitalisation - trouble psychiatrique - trouble de l'usage - évaluation du risque suicidaire

SANDU Ecaterina

41 pages – 6 tableaux – 1 figure -2 graphiques

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