

SUICIDE IN CHINESE PATIENTS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

ABSTRACT

A selected literature search revealed a dearth of research on suicide in non-Western patients with schizophrenia. Most of the available data regarding risk factors for suicide in schizophrenia is derived from research on Western samples. Little is known about the relevance of these risk factors in Chinese patients with schizophrenia.

This retrospective case-control study reports on the research findings of a group of 52 Hong Kong Chinese outpatients with an ICD-10 diagnosis of schizophrenia who committed suicide between 1993-2001, compared with a control group of 52 matched outpatients on follow-up at the same psychiatric outpatient clinic. Both groups were matched for age, sex, principal psychiatric diagnosis and duration of psychiatric treatment. A descriptive analysis of the characteristics of the suicide group was followed by univariate analyses of cases versus controls, using variables that were selected from the literature review. Selected variables were then entered into a backward conditional multiple logistic regression model. There were no significant differences between males and females in the case group. The method of choice for suicide was jumping from height, followed by hanging, collision with moving vehicles and stabbing, in that order. Most of the suicide cases died within four weeks of last psychiatric contact. The risk factors that were significantly associated with completed suicide after multivariate analysis included: marriage, lower education level, shorter duration of illness and shorter duration since last inpatient discharge. The significance of these findings are examined and discussed in relation to local and foreign research on suicide in schizophrenia.

Key Words: suicide, Chinese, schizophrenia.