

Abstracts

Introduction:

Suicidal behavior in hospital general ward population is an uncommon but well-recognized phenomenon, and is associated with significant medicolegal issues.

Objectives:

To describe and explore those factors associated with suicidal behavior in hospital general ward population

Method:

A descriptive study was conducted on those attempted and completed suicide in general wards of 2 hospitals in Hong Kong between 01.01.95 and 31.12.03. This was followed by a retrospective case-notes review case-control study and a survival analysis between those attempted suicides in general ward and their matched control.

Results:

There were a total of 84 cases of attempted suicide and 13 completed suicides in this 9 years period. The incidences of attempted and completed suicide in general hospital were 6.2 and 1.0 per 100,000 admissions respectively. Most of them were depressed male elderly. Multivariate analysis found four independent associated factors for those attempted suicide in general ward. They included: past history of attempted suicide, confusion in ward, active diagnosis of malignancy and ischaemic heart disease; while chronic obstructive airway diseases as an active physical diagnosis had a trend to reach statistical significance. Survival analysis founded the subsequent survival of those attempted suicide in general ward was statistically significantly shorter than their matched controls. For those few who completed suicide in general

ward, the descriptive study found that they appeared to have a similar profile as those attempted suicide in the ward, except a much higher rate of past psychiatric history and harmful use of alcohol.

Discussion & Conclusion:

Our findings suggested that those admitted for distressing chronic physical illness with past history of attempted suicide tended to attempt suicide in general wards, when their judgement and self-control were impaired by confusion. For those few who completed suicide in general ward of hospital, they had high rate of past psychiatric history and history of harmful use of alcohol. Health care professionals are recommended to pay more attention to these factors. Meanwhile, more researches on this topic are needed.

Key Words: attempted suicide, suicide, general hospital, physical illness