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SUICIDAL IDEATION IN ITALIAN ELDERLY. PRELIMINAR DATA FROM THE "FAENZA PROJECT"

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Aims: To evaluate prevalence rate of suicidal ideation among Italian elderly and to investigate possible socio-demographic and psychopathological features of suicide attempters in a population-based study.

Methods: 461 subjects (mean age 85 years; 52.9% women; 49.2% widow) were interviewed using the Revised Cambridge Examination for Mental Disorders in the Elderly. The presence of suicidal ideation was assessed by the Scale for Suicide Ideation. The association between suicidal ideation and its correlates was analysed by Logistic Regression Model estimating Odds Ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals (OR, 95%CI).

Results: Eighteen (3,8%) persons refused to answer to questions concerning suicide thoughts. Only one participant declared to have attempted suicide (a 92 years-old men, widow, living on his own and complaining about depressive feelings). Overall suicidal ideation prevalence was 7.3%: wish to die (3.8%) and not worth living (13%). Gender, age, education, marital and socio-economic status were similar in subjects with and without suicidal ideation. Subjects with suicidal ideation had fewer family contacts, were less satisfied of their general health status and had a higher number of depressive and anxiety symptoms. However, when all these conditions were tested in the same model, only depressive symptoms were still significantly associated with suicidal ideation (OR, 95%CI=9.6, 3.3-27.9).

Conclusion: The worldwide aging of the population deserves attention to psycho-geriatric medicine. Study on suicide in late-life are of interest to detect elderly at risk and to emphasize this increasing phenomenon.