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Passive suicidal ideation as a risk factor for suicide: Are we Asking the Right Questions?

-Plenary Lecture-

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Abstract

Many lists of risk factors are available throughout the field of suicide prevention. This paper provides a brief overview of the importance of risk and protective factors as they relate to suicide and offers guidance about how mental health experts and communities can best use them to decrease suicide risk. Special emphasis will be placed on the role of passive suicidal ideation as a risk factors for suicide. Also, we will discuss difficulties during screening and suicide risk assesment proceses.

In recent years, researchers and clinicians do not treat passive suicidal ideation as a clinically relevant risk factor for suicide, while underestimating the strength of this desire to die, compared with making a plan for suicide in individuals having active suicidal ideation. Screening of clinically relevant risk factors for suicide and identifying specific differences between passive and active suicidal ideation allow clinicians to identify the group of individuals at risk of suicide, to offer appropriate prevention and effective treatment. Active suicidal ideation can be defined as any thought of self-hurting or plans for taking one's life (Schulberg et al., 2005; Raue, Meyers, Rowe, Heo, & Bruce 2007). Clinicians often see active suicidal ideation as clinically relevant risk factors for suicide. There are empirical findings that are in favor of that passive suicidal ideation, or the "wish to die" is also an important factor to consider in assessing the risk of suicide (Baca-Garcia et al., 2011; Moran, 2013). Passive suicidal ideation can be characterized as emotionally colored thoughts, more as a wish, according to which life is not worth living or that it is better for the

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person to be dead (Schulberg et al., 2005; Raue et al., 2007). One third of individuals with suicidal attempts in the past had passive suicidal ideation, or had plans for committing suicide (Baca-Garcia et al., 2011; Moran, 2013).

Unfortunately, both in the region and in R. Macedonia there are no general studies that examine passive suicidal ideation, or compare the role and importance of passive and suicidal ideas, i.e. how they contribute to suicidal risk and suicidal behavior, which is why this topic is a research challenge. In this paper we will present and discuss empirical findings and experience from the world and from Macedonia.

Querying individuals on desire for death has the same value as assessing suicidal ideation to examine risk for suicide attempt. A combination of desire for death and suicidal ideation is the best predictor for suicide attempts. This is of high clinical relevance since we suggest that desire for death should be included as a potential clinical marker of suicidality in clinical assessments.

Key words: passive suicidal ideation; active suicidal ideation; suicidal risk; assessment.