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Cognitive Markers in Suicidal Major Depressive Disorder Patients

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Introduction: Cognitive impairment is a major factor influencing the severity and prognosis of major depression. On the other hand, the impossibility of finding solutions and support is characteristic for individuals with suicidal behavior. Therefore, the comparative investigation of cognitive functioning in suicidal and non-suicidal major depression disorder patients seems to be justified.

Aim: To evaluate whether suicidal major depressive disorder patients show a specific pattern of cognitive impairment as compared to non-suicidal major depressive disorder patients.

Material and methods: 60 adult major depressive disorder patients (as diagnosed by using the ICD-10 criteria) were included, of which 30 were identified as having a significant suicide risk by using the Paykel Suicide Scale. Cognitive functioning (working memory and executive functions) was assessed by using the CogTest battery.

Results: Both working memory and executive function performance were lower in suicidal patients, with problem solving being the most prominent marker related to suicide risk.

Conclusions: Severe problem solving deficiency might be a marker of suicide risk in major depressive disorder patients.