

SUICIDES IN THE GREEK ISLAND OF CRETE DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS: REALITY VS MYTH

A.N. Vgontzas¹, A. Kastanaki², E. Michalodimitrakis², M. Basta¹, E. Koutentaki¹, N. Michalas¹

¹Psychiatry, ²Forensic Medicine, University Hospital of Heraklion - Crete, Heraklion, Greece

Introduction: Recently, suicides in Greece, have drawn national and international interest due to the current economic crisis. According to published reports, suicides in Greece have increased up to 40%. Specifically, lay press has highlighted Crete as an area with the sharpest increase of suicides in Greece.

Objectives: To explore whether the economic crisis is associated with increased suicide rates in Crete.

Aim: To investigate the suicide rates in Crete between 1999-2011.

Methods: Data on suicides were selected from the Department of Forensic Medicine files of the University Hospital of Heraklion/Crete, as well as from the Forensic Medicine Files of Crete.

Results: Our analysis showed that during the period examined (1) Crete, although has the highest suicide rate in Greece, there is no significant increase between 1999-2011, (2) Deaths due to suicide are four times more frequent in men compared to women, (3) In women there is a significant decrease of suicides, (4) There is a decreasing trend for suicides in Western Crete whereas, there is an increasing trend in Eastern Crete.

Conclusions: Crete has the highest suicide rates in Greece, which however, has not increased during the last 13 yrs. There is a relative increase of suicides in Eastern compared to Western Crete during this period. Our findings do not support the popular belief of increased suicides due to the current economic crisis. The relative increase of suicides in Eastern Crete may be explained by other factors, i.e the lack of community psychiatric services in the area.