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Introduction

Anxiety is one of the most common disorders in the elderly, twice as prevalent as dementia and four to eight times more prevalent than major depressive disorder. 90% of late-life anxiety are accounted for by either generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) or specific phobia and is often comorbid with depression, therefore older adults being particularly vulnerable to suicide.

Objectives

This study sought to determine the prevalence of suicidal behavior among older patients with GAD hospitalized in the Psychiatry Department of Arad between 2009-2012.

Aims

To evaluate the suicide risk in late-life anxiety.

Methods

Our research is based on the study of 65 subjects (52 female and 13 male) diagnosed with GAD; the mean age was 68.3. The diagnostic of GAD was based on the DSM-IV and ICD-10 criteria. The study protocol assessed age, sex, social support, economic status, length of illness, recent traumatic events, medical or another psychiatric illness. The severity of the suicide risk was estimated according to: presence of thoughts of death, severity of suicidal ideation, history of suicide attempt, severity of suicide attempt.

Results

The onset of GAD for the majority of patients was in earlier life with late-life exacerbation. 41 patients had associated minor depression. Our study revealed a risk of suicide of 4.6% (three patients).

Conclusions

Patients diagnosed with GAD have a higher suicide risk, especially in association with depression, medical illnesses or lack of social support. In the future, specific diagnostic criteria for late-life anxiety will be needed, in order to prevent suicidal behavior.