

SOCIODEMOGRAPHICAL AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS TO DIFFERENTIATE SUICIDE BY BURNING FROM ACCIDENTAL AND CRIMINAL BURNING: A 11 YEARS RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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Introduction: Suicide by burning is considered like a violent suicide mechanism.

In our western countries, suicide by burning is relatively rare. But the number of cases seems to increase.

Objectives: It is important to be able to differentiate suicidal, accidental and criminal burning. It could help physicians, particularly when a patient try to dissimulate a self immolation.

Aims: The aim of our study is to find criterias which can differentiate suicidal, accidental and criminal burning.

Methods: We collected all the cases of burning related deaths and burning wounds in alive patients, treated at the Forensic Department of the University Hospital Center of Tours, France, at the request of the Prosecutor, between 2000 and 2011. The aspects of death (suicidal, accidental, or criminal) were done by the police officers. In each case we studied sociodemographic and psychopathological datas.

Results: We collected 53 cases, divided into three groups : accident (25), suicide (18), and crime (10). Mean age was 43,9. In cases of accidental burning, 73% had a psychiatric history, and 50% an alcohol abuse. In all these cases of suicide by burning, depression is the major diagnostic (69%).

Conclusion: In cases of accidental burning, we defined two specific groups. In cases of criminal burning, the victims were aged between 20 and 40, and under alcohol during the offense. In cases of suicide by burning, the mean age is about 48, principally men, who use violent suicide methods. They have generally a documented psychiatric history.