

MALE SUICIDES, UNEMPLOYMENT AND ANTIDEPRESSANTS CONSUMPTION: A PROBLEMATIC RELATION IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC RECESSION

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Background: Since 2008 economic recession, all countries in Europe are experiencing severe consequences such as lowering of income and increase in unemployment. Several researches in literature point out that both unemployment and the fear of unemployment have negative consequences on health.

Aim: To study the relation between male suicidal behavior and antidepressants prescription in times of economic recession.

Methods: Descriptive study. The rate of suicide, attempted suicide, and unemployment were obtained from the website of the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT: www.istat.it, www.demo.istat.it). Data referring to drug consumption were found on the website of the Italian Agency of Drugs (AIFA: www.agenziafarmaco.gov.it). Years from 2000 to 2010 were studied. Statistics performed with the Pearson's coefficient.

Results: In Italy, in the last 10 years, the use of SSRIs and other new antidepressants (not TCA) steadily increased. Since the onset of the 2008 economic crises, unemployment rate increased from 6,1% in 2007 to 8,65% in 2010. The overall number of male suicides increased dramatically especially in the most recent years of economic crises, moving from 2.197 in 2008 up to 2.399 in 2010. In particular, comparing the number of male self-harm behaviours due to financial problems with the rate of unemployment in years 2007-2010, a linear correlation is found ($r=0.92$ for male suicides; $r= 0.90$ for male attempted suicides).

Conclusions: Greater availability of antidepressant therapies in Italy does not seem to impact on suicide rate as elsewhere reported (i.e. Hungary). These findings could support an important environmental effect, mediated by financial problems.