Author's response to reviews

Title: Voluntary self-poisoning as a cause of admission to a tertiary hospital internal medicine clinic in Piraeus, Greece within a year

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PDF covering letter
Ms Carole Mongin-Bulewski, PhD
Editorial Assistant
BioMedCentral

Dear Professor Mongin-Bulewski,

Regarding your kind reply to the submitted paper titled “Voluntary self-poisoning as a cause of admission to a tertiary hospital internal medicine clinic in Piraeus, Greece within a year”

We have made all effort possible to comply with the reviewers remarks

The replies to questions posed is as follows:

Dr Lars E Schmidt’s comments

1. The department belongs to a tertiary care hospital, but as correctly assumed by the reviewer, all admissions were from the Emergency clinic and none was transferred from another hospital
2. Indeed, “need” of psychiatric help is the term more appropriate to define the objective than “significance”
3. Self-poisoning was not routinely confirmed by blood tests. In selected cases, where in doubt, legal controversy or in suspicion of excessive dosing, benzodiazepine and paracetamol assays were performed
4. No hepatotoxicity occurred, at appropriate checks
5. We state that 11% were transferred to Psychiatry Department straightout, during their initial admission. A much greater proportion was indeed diagnosed having mental illness and they were offered outpatient psychiatric counselling at a specific clinic link, which most of them accepted and attended.
6. All patients did receive an instruction or offer for counselling
7. The comparison with the previous Greek study was included in detail (number, percentages, significance)
8. The antidepressant percentage in the previous study was also included
Second Reviewer’s (Dr B Bhugra) comments

The study deals only with suicide attempts via voluntary drug overdose, as other kind of attempts like hanging, fall, gunshot etc are admitted to surgical wards, but practically they are an extremely small percentage of suicide attempts. Therefore, an increase or decrease in medical voluntary Self-poisoning admissions reflects quite acceptably the overall suicide attempt trend. Only voluntary self-poisoning was included and accidental overdose was excluded.

Primary Psychiatric diagnosis by group was included in Table IV
The hospital catchment area is a large urban part of Piraeus and some of Athens most crowded industrial neighbourhoods, reaching a population of 1.5-2 million, largely of low socio-economic status
All such patients were admitted, no refusers occurring in this stage.

We await your reply anticipation and many thanks

Yours sincerely

A.Sotiropoulos, MD