

MORTALITY IN PEOPLE WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS IN A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL IN GREECE

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Introduction: Patients with schizophrenia seem to have a higher mortality and a lower life expectancy compared to the general population.

Aims: To estimate the rate of mortality at a psychiatric hospital and to identify the causes and risk factors of these deaths.

Methods: A retrospective study was conducted based on the medical records of patients who had died during the time period from January 2007 to March 2012 at the 250-bed Psychiatric Hospital of Tripolis in Greece.

Results: A total of 39 deaths were recorded (mean annual mortality: 1.7 per 1000 inpatients). Patients were predominantly male (67%), mean age 64 years, most of them farmers (41%), with low educational level (69%) and mainly unmarried (72%). Medical co-morbidity was observed in 74% of the cases, mainly hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. In 59% hospitalization was made after a court order. Thirty two patients were diagnosed with schizophrenia, mainly of the paranoid form (77%). Haloperidol was the most prescribed antipsychotic drug (62%). The main causes of mortality were respiratory and cardiovascular diseases (each 59%). Six of the occurred deaths could not be determined, but autopsy classified them as natural cause of death.

Conclusions: Low rate of mortality, no clear forensic responsibility and high rates of medical co-morbidities in schizophrenia patients were observed in this study. The implementation of medical screening and prevention programs of serious health problems should be a high priority in psychiatric hospitals in order to improve quality of life and extend life expectancy in mentally ill adults.