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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEVELS OF SALIVARY CORTISOL WITH DEPRESSION AND SUICIDAL IDEATION

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Introduction: Suicide is a major public health problem in most of the countries because it has a high prevalence in young people. It has been studied that high levels of cortisol are associated with depression and increase of the suicidal risk.

Objective: To analyze the relationship between cortisol levels in a population of university students and the questionnaire results for the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI).

Method: The sample was composed by 106 students of the Nursing School of Santiago de Compostela University. The 88.7% of the sample are women with a mean age of 21.50 + / - 2.52, the 99% are unmarried. The protocol consisted in 3 sections: demographic variables, BDI questionnaire with spanish scale and determination of salivary cortisol levels.

Statistical analysis was done with SPSS 15.

Results: There are higher levels of salivary cortisol in students with a greater or equal score to 13 on the BDI with statistically significant differences ( $p=.000$ ). Students with suicidal ideation (item 9 of the BDI) have highest rates of cortisol, with statistically significant differences ( $p=0.001$ ).

Conclusions: This study supports other researches about the association between biological neuroendocrine markers and affective disorders. Explaining suicidal behavior could help us to prevent it by using early intervention strategies for vulnerable populations. They could also identify markers to establish the risk of suicide.