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KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR IN PHYSICIANS IN THE COUNTY OF MINSK , BELARUS

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Introduction: Belarus has one of the worlds' highest suicide rates (48.5 and 9.1/100,000 for men and women, respectively). The country's first suicide prevention project (2009-2013) focuses on educational courses for all physicians employed in primary health care (N=120) in two regions of the county of Minsk (Total population: 73,663).

Objective: The aim of this paper was to investigate physicians' knowledge with regard to suicide prevention as well as their experience of suicidal behavior based on findings from the pilot study.

Methods: 45 physicians (mean age 43.6; 31 women, 14 men; 35% of all physicians) had participated in the first training courses, including two educational seminars (24 hours, 2009-2010). All participating physicians answered the questionnaire with 40 items distributed before the training courses.

Result: The preliminary findings indicate that half of the participating doctors (N=22) considered mental disorders as being the main risk factor for suicide and equally many defined suicide as an expression of "spiritual weakness". 48% considered that asking patients about suicidal thoughts can stimulate the act. As many as 47% (21 physicians) had experienced a patients' suicide during their professional practice (14 of them more than once). About half of the doctors (N=24) have been confronted with a patient's suicide attempt and 20 participants (44%) experienced suicidal behavior of close friends and relatives. 17 (38%) and 2 doctors reported suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts ever in life, respectively.

Conclusion: Improved suicidological knowledge is badly needed, particularly in the light of the frequent confrontation with suicidal patients.