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Socio-demographic characteristics, clinical profile and prevalence of existing mental illness among suicide attempters attending emergency services at two hospitals in Hawassa city, South Ethiopia: A cross-sectional study**Moges Ayehu, Tarekegn Solomon and Kinfe Lemm**
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Background & Aim: Suicide is a major public health problem worldwide. It contributes for more than one million deaths each year. Since previous suicidal attempt was considered as the best predictor of future suicide, identifying factors behind suicidal attempt are helpful to design suicide prevention strategies. The aim of this study was to assess socio-demographic characteristics, clinical profile and prevalence of existing mental illness among patients presenting with suicidal attempt to emergency services of general hospitals in South Ethiopia.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted on patients presenting with suicidal attempt to emergency departments of two general hospitals in Hawassa city from November, 2014 to August, 2015. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire which contained socio-demographic and clinical variables. The Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview version 5 (MINI PLUs) was used to assess the prevalence of existing mental illness among study participants.

Results: A total of 96 individuals were assessed, of whom 56 (58.3%) were females. The mean (SD) age of study participants was 21.5 (8.0) years. The majority, 75 (78.1%), of the study participants were aged below 25 years. Mental illness was found in only three (3.1%) of the study participants. Impulsivity (the time between decision to attempt suicide and the actual attempt of less than 5 minutes) was reported by 30 (31.2%) of the study participants, of whom 18 (60%) were males. Males were found three times more likely to attempt suicide impulsively than women (COR=3.0, 95% CI: 1.2-7.3). Psychosocial stressors were found as immediate reasons to attempt suicide by the majority.

Conclusion: The presence of stressful life events and impulsivity behind suicidal behavior of the younger generation implies that designing suicide prevention strategies for this group is crucial. Focus research is needed to systematically examine the relationship between the presence of mental illness and suicidal attempt with a larger sample size.

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