



An international study evaluates the risk of suicide based on progenitors' mental disorders

The study was conducted in 21 countries with highly-consistent results between the different countries, overcoming the fragmentation seen in most earlier studies.

Barcelona, 16 February 2012.- The aim of the study was to determine which of parents' mental disorders were associated with the suicides of their offspring, and which of parents' illnesses could be most significant in their children's ideation of suicide changing to actual suicide plans and attempts. The study proved that all of parents' mental disorders are associated with a higher tendency of suicidal ideation among their children, but only generalised anxiety and depression are associated with the actual elaboration of suicide plans and the persistence over time of suicidal ideation, while parents' antisocial personality and anxiety disorders are associated with children attempting suicide and its persistence over time.

'It is fundamental to consider the possible risk of suicidal behaviour in families in which the parents suffer some type of mental disorder, and to take into account that this risk increases with every additional illness that the parents experience', explains Jordi Alonso, co-principal investigator of the Spanish research team, director of the Epidemiology and Public Health Programme at the IMIM (Hospital del Mar Research Institute) and European scientific coordinator of the World Mental Health Surveys.

The work has been conducted in the framework of World Mental Health (WMH) in 21 countries in 5 continents, with a sample of 109,381 individuals who were personally interviewed by personnel trained for this purpose. The study took a wide-range of data into account about the health of the individuals interviewed, including their own mental disorders and their diagnoses of physical pathologies, which has enabled them to make a more valid estimation of the associations that were studied.

Suicide is a large problem in public health that, although primarily affecting adults and the elderly, is the second cause of death among adolescents in the Western world. **However, it must be remembered that suicide is partly preventable. The early identification and the suitable treatment of mental disorders are extremely-important prevention strategies.**

The results of this study could be relevant for steering future studies performed about the genetic basis for suicide, having an impact on the psychopathological phenotypes that are most highly associated with the different stages of suicide.

'In the case of attempting and committing suicide, the possible common genetic basis would have to be studied between the lack of controlling impulses and suicide, centring less on specific mental disorders and analysing the underlying traits in these disorders', concludes Dr Jordi Alonso.

Reference article

Gureje O et al. *Parental psychopathology and the Risk of Suicidal Behaviour in their Offspring: Results from the World Mental Health Surveys*. *Molecular Psychiatry* 2011; 16: 1221-33.

For further information, please contact:

Rosa Manaut, IMIM Communications Manager, Tel.: 618509885; or Marta Calsina, IMIM Communications Service, Tel.: 933160680.