Reply to: [Psychother Psychosom 1995;63:54]: Chronic Pain and Suicide

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Professor Fishbain has pointed out the divergence in his results [1] and the results found by Stensman and Sundqvist-Stensman [2] regarding suicide risk in patients with chronic pain. Stenager et al. [3] have in a previous paper pointed out that the methods used in the study by Stensman and Sundqvist-Stensman, in which a comparison was made between the distribution of a disease in persons who had committed suicide and the frequency of the disease in the general population, can hardly support the conclusions drawn in the investigation, as it cannot be presumed that distribution by age and sex in the general population is identical to that in the population committing suicide.

Stenager et al. [4] have found that patients suffering from multiple sclerosis have a 2-fold increased suicide risk. Pain is frequently met in this disease [5]. Also patients with cancer, a disease involving pain, have an increased suicide risk [6]. In contrast patients having Parkinson's disease and motor neuron disease do not have an increased risk of suicide [7, 8]. Both disorders are usually not associated with pain.

Consequently, we fully agree with Professor Fishbain that the correlation between suicide risk and chronic pain requires further research.

References

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