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The role of physical and mental health multimorbidity in suicidal ideation

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Abstract

Background:

Previous research has focused on the separate roles of mental illness and physical health conditions in suicide risk, with relatively few studies investigating the importance of physical and psychiatric disorder co-occurrence. We aimed to investigate whether suicidal ideation might be influenced by physical and mental ill-health multimorbidity.

Methods:

Data from the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey of England were analysed. Participants who responded to the suicidal thoughts question were grouped into four distinct categories based on their health conditions (Common mental disorders (CMD) only, physical health conditions only, CMD/physical health multimorbidity and a control group with neither physical nor mental health conditions). Multinomial logistic regression analyses were conducted and odds ratios (OR) and 95% CIs are presented.

Results:

In the fully adjusted model, both the multimorbidity and CMD-only groups were associated with higher levels of suicidal ideation relative to the control group.

Limitations:

Secondary analyses of cross-sectional data.

Conclusions:

Although multimorbidity was associated with suicidal thoughts, it does not appear to elevate risk beyond the independent effects of common mental disorders or physical health problems. Primary care and mental health clinicians should consider assessment of suicide ideation among patients with multimorbid physical/mental health conditions.

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