

SUICIDE IN PORTUGAL: COMPARISON BETWEEN COASTAL AND INLAND REGIONS

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Suicide is the act of intentionally causing one's own death. It is often committed out of despair, the cause of which is attributed to a mental disorder, alcoholism, drug abuse or stress factors such as financial difficulties or troubles with interpersonal relationships. In the 20th century it is possible that more people have died from suicide than in the two great wars occurred in the same century. The World Health Organization estimates that it is the 13th leading cause of death worldwide.

This study aimed to describe the situation of different regions of central Portugal with regard to suicidal behavior in the general population, comparing different data from coastal and inland regions. The intention was also to compare these realities with national and european standards.

The authors present a retrospective study of over 8000 forensic autopsies performed between 2006 and 2010 in the portuguese regions of Aveiro, Castelo Branco, Coimbra, Covilhã, Figueira da Foz, Leiria, Viseu and Tomar, of which around 15% were related to suicide. Several variables were characterized in order to establish the profile and circumstances of suicide in these regions.

As the portuguese legislation predicts a forensic exam in cases of violent death, the continuous raise of the number of autopsies from suicides means that this trend shows an alarming increase. Data collected from forensic post mortem exams may prove essential to understand this phenomenon, which is a source of economical and social impoverishment.