

## SUICIDOLOGY

Doina Cosman

Presa Universitara Clujeana, Cluj-Napoca, 2013  
378 pages, ISBN 978-973-595-601-1

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This book, written by Doina Cosman, covers the scientific study of suicidal behavior developed in the 19th century and called suicidology. The author makes an exceptional presentation of all the aspects of suicide, beginning with genetic influence to numerous correlations. The author studied the subject thoroughly, both from a theoretical and practical point of view.

The subject is important because suicide is a general human problem before being a medical concern. This book is a summary of research on the topic over the last several decades.

The book begins with an overview of the history of suicide which shows the changes in attitude toward this kind of death in different cultures and different periods of time. Suicide was condemned, prohibited, it was (and still is) considered a sin. But, in some cultures it was sacred, a way of showing loyalty to someone or a strong belief in something, while in others it meant to end one's life with honour and as a kind of pledge for individual freedom.

Suicide should be differentiated from attempted suicide and parasuicide which are explained in the second chapter along with the types, phases and functions of suicide. The author states that the most recent theory about suicide is the theory of "entrapment" which includes a model of "cry for pain".

One of the highlights of this book is that the biological and the neuropsychological aspects of suicidal behavior are described. The roles of serotonergic activity, dopamine and the "glucocorticoide cascade" hypothesis are explained along with their connections with cognitive functions.

As mentioned before, suicidal death is a serious public health problem. The suicide rate is rapidly increasing, especially in teenagers and young adults. The author gives a vast overview of the statistical data regarding the epidemiology of suicide. Specific statistical data are provided on the suicide rates in Romania, which show similarities with the ones from Europe and USA. The author also mentions the risk factors identified by research: the initial period of depression, the comorbidity with personality disorders and with somatic illnesses. For the assessment of the risk factors different scales are used and

can be found in the annexes of the book which the author explained in details.

One of the big questions is why the people want to end their own lives. The author tried to get closer to the answer by giving the readers a glimpse of insight into possible self murderers' way of thinking. Consequently an entire chapter is dedicated to shedding some light on the suicidal behavior of artists and the idea of the necessity of death. As Tudor Vianu said: "The interest of the artistic life does not coincide with that of personal conservation. The artist does not live his life but consumes it. The pain felt by an artist may become his creative impulse, unchained by that signal."

The author stresses the need for every doctor to have the capacity to recognize and assist a suicidal person because the ignorance and non treatment of the suicide risk are, and remain, a very frequent problem in primary care.

In the tenth chapter the treatment of suicidal behavior is discussed, including pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy. Psychotherapy does not constitute a definitive liberation from the suicidal ideation and tendencies, but a factor of strengthening the adaptive mechanisms.

The author states that the psychotherapy of the cognitive type has demonstrated the greatest efficiency in the suicidal problems.

In the last 20 years there have been programs for the prevention of suicidal behavior and many suicide prevention centers were opened in which volunteers play a very important role. Therefore, it is very important to encourage people to volunteer because it could save someone's life.

Everyone interested in suicidology will profit from reading this book, ranging from students to academic researchers, even though it would be a bit difficult for lay persons.

This book represents a significant contribution to the field of suicidology and is a way of promoting suicide awareness, as it is a big public health problem. Also, it is important to emphasize that suicide concerns not only the victim but also their entourage, medical professionals and the society.

Iva Dugalic, Rijeka