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Journal Article: Determinants and Outcomes of Suicidal Behavior Among Patients With Major Depressive Disorder

This JAMA psychiatry article examines how suicidal behavior in patients with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) affects the clinical outcome, including rates of mortality and comorbidity. The purpose of the study is to determine whether patients diagnosed with MDD who engage in suicidal behaviors, such self-harm or suicide attempts, have different long-term outcomes compared with those who don't, and to identify associated risk presentations that can aid providers in targeting appropriate interventions with high results of success.

This research was a population-based cohort study using the Stockholm MDD Cohort, which followed adults diagnosed with MDD between 2012 and 2017. Documentations of patients who had previously engaged in suicidal behaviors, including attempts to end their life, were compared to those with no recorded history. The analysis controlled for potential confounders by using multivariable regression models that adjusted for demographic and clinical characteristics, including age, sex, and psychiatric comorbidities, to isolate the effect of suicidal behaviors. Measurement of long-term outcomes included mortality rates, prevalence of comorbid psychiatric and medical conditions and patterns of healthcare utilizations.

The study found that MDD patients with suicidal behavior had a significantly higher risk of all-cause mortality compared with those without suicidal behavior. Additionally, individuals with suicidal behavior were more like to exhibit additional psychiatric conditions such as anxiety, substance use disorder and/or personality disorders. The presence of sleep disturbances and psychosocial stressors was also higher in the group engaging in suicidal behaviors. These findings suggest that suicidal behavior in the context of depression is not just a symptom but highlights greater illness severity and overall clinical burden.

Lundberg et al., 2023 is highly relevant to my patient, J.C., a 20 yo female presenting with a long history of depressive symptoms and ongoing suicidal ideation, including a recent acetaminophen overdose. The finding that suicidal behavior in MDD is associated with increased mortality and psychiatric comorbidity supports the clinical urgency of her presentation and underscores the need for comprehensive intervention. Her chronic ideation, functional impairment and history of a suicide attempt align with the study's identified high-risk profile.

The article reinforces the importance of aggressive safety planning, longitudinal follow-up, and multimodal treatment (combining pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy) for patients like J.C. It also highlights why her ongoing symptoms should not be minimized because suicidal behavior in depression is associated with worse outcomes if left untreated.

Lundberg J, Cars T, Lampa E, et al. Determinants and Outcomes of Suicidal Behavior Among Patients With Major Depressive Disorder. JAMA Psychiatry. 2023;80(12):1218–1225. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.2833