

Suicide Epidemiology Before and During the War in Croatia

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Aim. To study the incidence of suicide and its distribution according to age, sex and method in the Zagreb area before and during the war in Croatia.

Method. The analysis of autopsy records at the Department of Forensic Medicine and Criminology on suicides committed during the five-year (1986-1990) peace period, and five-year war period (1991-1995, from the beginning of the war in Croatia until the military *Flash* and *Storm* actions in 1995).

Results. During the pre-war and war period, 908 and 1,040 bodies of suicides, respectively, were examined at the Department of Forensic Medicine and Criminology in Zagreb. In both study periods, male to female ratio was considerably in favor of the male sex (2.5:1 and 2.7:1, respectively). Most suicides were aged 50-69 years. Although hanging was the most common way of committing suicide in both study periods, its proportion significantly declined during the war, whereas the number of suicides committed by side arms significantly increased. During the war period, the cases of suicides committed by explosive devices were observed.

Conclusion. The significant increase in the proportion of suicides committed by firearms and occurrence of suicides committed by explosive devices were primarily due to the great availability of these weapons during the war.

Key words: *firearms; forensic medicine; suicide; war*

Received: October 10, 1996

Accepted: December 15, 1996

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