Journal of Affective Disorders 170 (2015) 237–254

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Affective Disorders

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jad

Review

Risk factors for suicide in bipolar disorder: A systematic review

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 30 July 2014
Received in revised form
18 August 2014
Accepted 2 September 2014
Available online 16 September 2014

Keywords:
Bipolar
Suicide
Risk factors

ABSTRACT

Background: Bipolar disorder confers the highest risk of suicide among major psychological disorders. The risk factors associated with bipolar disorder and suicide exist and are relevant to clinicians and researchers.
Objective: The aim of the present study was to conduct a systematic review of articles regarding the suicide risk factors in bipolar disorder.
Methods: A systematic review of articles on suicide risk factors in bipolar disorder, published from January 1, 2010 to April 05, 2014, on SCOPUS and PUBMED databases was carried out. Search terms were "Suicide" (medical subject headings [MeSH]), "Risk factors" (MeSH), and "Bipolar" (keyword). Of the 220 retrieved studies, 42 met the eligibility criteria.
Results: Bipolar disorder is associated with an increased rate death by suicide which contributes to overall mortality rates. Studies covered a wide range of aspects regarding suicide risk factors in bipolar disorder, such as risk factors associated to Sociodemographic conditions, Biological characteristics, Drugs Relationships, Psychological Factors, Genetic Compound, Religious and Spirituals conditions. Recent scientific literature regarding the suicide risk factors in bipolar disorder converge to, directly or indirectly, highlight the negative impacts of risk factors to the affected population quality of life.
Conclusion: This review demonstrated that Bipolar disorders commonly leads to other psychiatric disorders and co-morbidities involving risk of suicide. Thus the risk factors are relevant to have a better diagnosis and prognosis of BD cases involving risk of suicide.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2014.09.003
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1. Introduction

Bipolar disorder confers the highest risk of suicide among major psychological disorders (Goldstein et al., 2012; Goodwin and Jamison, 2007). Suicide attempts and completed suicide are significantly more common in patients with bipolar disorder when compared with the general population (Eroglu et al., 2013; Simon et al., 2007; Weissman et al., 1999).

Bipolar spectrum disorders, especially recurrent depressive episodes, is the major risk of repeated suicide attempt and co-morbidity of another psychiatric disorders increase highly the risk of suicide reattempt (Kheirabadi et al., 2012). In particular, among mental disorders, bipolar disorder is one of the leading causes of suicidal behaviors and this is a major issue in the management of the disease. About 50% of patients with bipolar disorder will experience at least one suicide attempt (Jamison, 2000) and 11–19% will commit suicide (Goodwin and Jamison, 2007; Abreu et al., 2009; Angst et al., 2005; Harris and Barraclough, 1997; Parmentier et al., 2012).

This study is based on the following research question: what is the main suicide risk factors associated with bipolar disorder? This issue has gained great impact in recent years with the establishment of new risk factors for suicide and bipolar disorder. Thus, this systematic review aims to present the main risk factors and compares them, since the applicant was disagreement among authors. Therefore, it is suggested, that further studies are needed in order to establish a stronger relationship between bipolar disorder and its risk factors that culminate in suicide.

2. Methods

We performed a qualitative systematic review of articles about suicide risk factors in bipolar affective disorder in previously chosen electronic databases.

A search of the literature was conducted via PubMed and SCOPUS online databases in April 2014 and was limited to articles published from January 1, 2010 to April 6, 2014. The reason for limiting the search to 2010–2014 was that, during this period, there was an expansion of research into new types of comorbidities that influence the risk of suicide in Bipolar disorder, such as hopelessness, altitude and religiosity. Therefore, the Bipolar Affective Disorder and its association with suicide had greater relevance in the scientific community.

Initially, the search terms browsed in SCOPUS database were

1. “bipolar” (keyword);
2. “suicide” (Medical Subject Headings [MeSH] term); and
3. “risk factors” (MeSH term).

The following searches were performed: 1 AND 2 AND 3. In addition to MeSH terms, we opted to add the keyword “bipolar” to the search strategy, because, despite not being included in the MeSH thesaurus, it is frequently used to describe studies that deal with the theme object of the present review. The search strategy and the retrieved articles were reviewed on two separate occasions to ensure adequate sampling. A similar search strategy was performed in the PubMed database, using the aforementioned terms and their correspondent terms.

The article analysis followed previously determined eligibility criteria. We adopted the following inclusion criteria: Goldstein et al. (2012) references written in English; Goodwin and Jamison (2007) studies pertaining suicide risk factors in bipolar affective disorder; Eroglu et al., (2013) original articles with online accessible full text available in database SCOPUS, PubMed or CAPES (Higher Education Co-ordination Agency) Journal Portal (Periodicos.capes.gov.br, 2014), a virtual library linked to Brazil's Ministry of Education and subjected to content subscription; (Simon et al., 2007) articles that included in the title at least one combination of terms described in the search strategy; (Weissman et al., 1999) case reports, cohort studies, controlled clinical trials and case-control studies; Kheirabadi et al. (2012) articles that appear in more than one database will be included only once, giving priority to the SCOPUS database. Exclusion criteria were: Goldstein et al. (2012) studies that did not include the proposed topic; Goodwin and Jamison (2007) non-original studies, including editorials, reviews, prefaces, brief communications and letters to the editor.

Then, each paper in the sample was read in entirety, and data elements were then extracted and entered into a matrix that included authors, journal, description of the study sample, and main findings. Some of the studies dealt not only with the risk factors associated with bipolar disorder, but also to the risk factors in other psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia and mood disorder; because the focus of this study was the risk factors associated with suicide in bipolar disorder, studies related to psychiatric disorders in general were not recorded or analyzed for this study.

To provide a better analysis, the next phase involved comparing the studies and grouping. For heuristic reasons, the results regarding the studied subject into six categories: Risk factors associated with sociodemographic components; Risk factors associated with genetic components; Risk factors associated with Medicines and Drugs in general that interfere with bipolar disorder; Risk factors associated with Biological components; Risk factors associated with Psychological causes; and Risk factors associated with components of Religious and Spiritual components.

3. Results

Initially, the aforementioned search strategies resulted in 220 references. After browsing the title and abstract of the retrieved citations for eligibility based on study inclusion criteria, 178 articles were excluded and 42 articles were further retrieved and included

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