

Risk factors for suicidal ideation among Swedish Patients with Restless Legs Syndrome

11. Risk assessment and screening

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Abstract text

INTRODUCTION

Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is a chronic neurological condition marked by an irresistible urge to move the legs, especially at night, significantly disrupting sleep. Approximately 3% of the global population suffers from RLS, which negatively affects both mental and physical aspects of patients' quality of life. Limited studies have investigated suicidal ideation among RLS patients, though evidence indicates an elevated risk. The aim was to assess the prevalence of suicidal ideation among Swedish RLS patients and identify protective factors.

METHOD

This cross-sectional study recruited 1,500 RLS patients from a nationwide patient organization. Patients completed six validated questionnaires: Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) (depression), RLS-6 (RLS symptoms), Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) (sleep quality), Mastery Scale (level of mastery), Ethos Brief Index (life satisfaction) and eHEALS (eHealth literacy). Participants were categorized into two groups: working and retired individuals. Logistic regression analysis was used.

RESULTS

With a response rate of 52%, 788 diagnosed patients participated. Among retired patients (n=560), 16.8% reported suicidal ideation. Protective factors included higher level of mastery (OR 0.810, 95% CI 0.747–0.877) and life satisfaction (OR 0.967, 95% CI 0.940–0.995), while severe RLS symptoms were linked to increased suicidal ideation risk (OR 1.034, 95% CI 1.00–1.069).

In the working group (n=200), 17.3% reported suicidal ideation. Level of mastery (OR 0.761, 95% CI 0.642–0.902) was the sole protective factor. Poor sleep quality significantly raised the risk of suicidal ideation (OR 1.228, 95% CI 1.001–1.507).

CONCLUSION

Notable rates of suicidal ideation were seen among RLS patients, with both retired and working groups affected. Protective factors, such as levels of mastery and life satisfaction provide potential intervention points, while addressing severe RLS symptoms and poor sleep quality may help reduce risk. Further research is needed to develop targeted strategies for managing suicidal ideation in this population.