

Introduction:

Suicide is a real public health problem. In contrast with a classical idea, suicide is not specific to young people. Indeed, late life suicide is a cause for major concern, particularly for persons over 75 years. The Aim of this study aimed to underline the most important epidemiological characteristics and forensic aspects of the suicide in the elderly.

Materiel and methods :

This study is retrospective including 21 cases of suicide in people aged 65 years and more (Official definition of elderly by WHO), collected in the Forensic Medicine department of Tunis (Tunisia) in 2017, 2018 and during the first half of 2019.

Results:

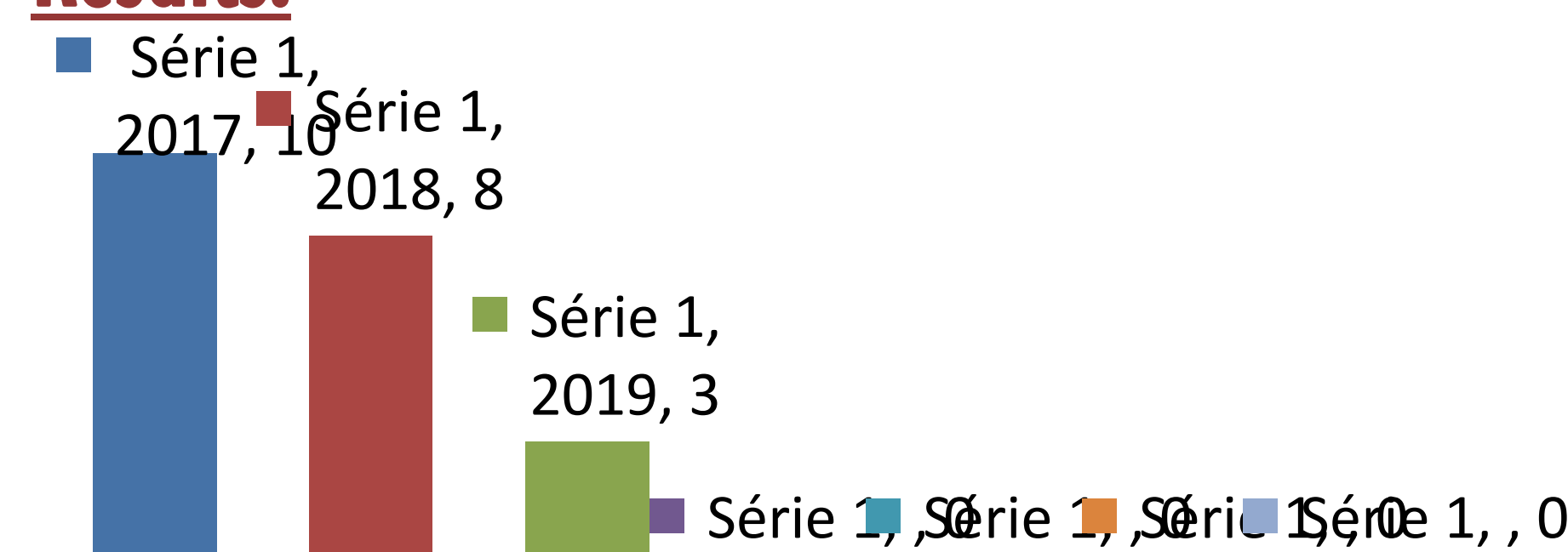


Figure 1: distribution of cases per year

Sex Ratio: M/F: 2/1

Sex of victims: Males: 66 %
Females: 33 %

The mean age: 73.66 years

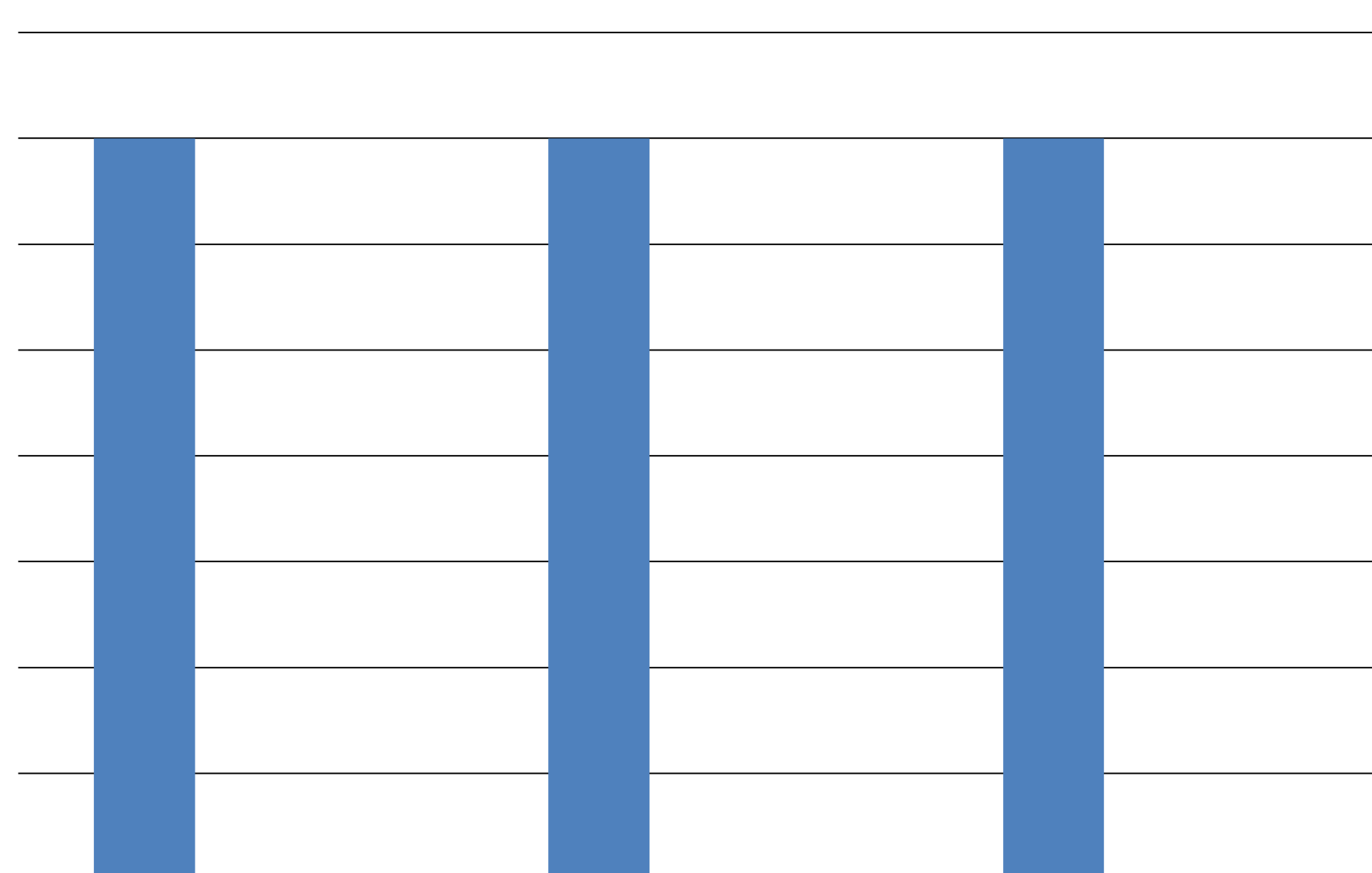


Figure 2: Distribution of cases by age

Type of medico-legal exam: 17 autopsies
4 external exam (intoxication++)

Table 1: causes of death

Cause of death	hanging	poisonning	Throat slitting
cases	15	4	2

- Poisonning: Drug poisoning: 3 cases
Organophosphate poisoning: 1 case

- Medical background → 13 cases : psychiatric disorders (++)
→ 8 cases: no medical background

DISCUSSION:

- In developed and developing countries, the proportion of the elderly has increased due to prolonged life expectancy and a falling birthrate. One reason why these demographic changes are important is because suicide rates increase with age (1).
- Suicide rates in the elderly for both sexes, with a few exceptions, are higher than the average rates for the whole population: France: 30.2 per 100000 (whole population) Vs 67.6 per 100000 (elderly) ; USA: 20.1 per 100000 (whole population) Vs 40.1 per 100000 (elderly) (1).
- In our study we notice an equal distribution of cases in age range → Males aged 75 and over have the highest rates of suicide in nearly all industrialized countries (2).
- The method of suicide employed varies over time, with age, gender and sociocultural factors: elderly men adopt more violent methods than women (2)
 - England: hanging → men Self poisoning → women
 - USA: firearms (++)
- * In several countries there has been a reduction in self-poisoning as a means of suicide in the elderly of both sexes, while suicide by benzodiazepines and analgesics has increased among the elderly in recent years, particularly in women (3).
- Suicide in the elderly is associated with physical illness, with bereavement, with increased life expectancy implying a greater exposure to physical ill health and social isolation, with loss of income, loss of status, and retirement, feelings of loneliness, despair and dependence on others (4).

* Depressive illness is the most important predictor of suicide: Most comprehensive studies in elderly suicide employing the psychological autopsy method report the prevalence of major depression and other mood disorders to be between 60 and 90%(2)
→ Factors associated with the vulnerability hypothesis in elderly suicides (++)

Conclusion

Suicide remains an important contributor to mortality worldwide and it affects even the elderly. Risk factors such as physical and psychiatric disorders are not very specific to suicide and the early detection and treatment of people at high risk remain important challenges.

Bibliography:

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