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SUICIDAL IDEATION AS RESEARCH MARKER IN DEPRESSION

Depressive behavior has been diagnosed through different procedures, including syndromal classifications using nosological and other criteria. The currently applied procedures are, however, hardly sufficient to practice for clinical research.

In order to delineate a distinct group of depressive patients with a recognizable and measurable symptom profile, we have gathered data on a number of patients who presented at least one depressive symptom (like sleep disturbance or psychomotor retardation). To this end we used biological and psychosocial test procedures, including the dexamethason-suppression-test (DST), the thyrotrophin-releasing-hormone-test (TRH-test), psychological rating scales for mood general activities, hedonia, anxiety (state and trait), sleep quality, and social contacts. In addition, the Present State Examination (PSE) Interview, the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression, the Montgomery-Asberg inventory, the Beck suicidal ideation scale, and the Life-Event scale of Paykel were completed. Forty five patients extended this investigation. According to the DSM-III criteria 14 patients were classified as suffering from a Major Affective Disorder, 9 patients from Atypical Depression, and 22 patients from Dystymic Depression. Preliminary analysis of the data showed a dichotomy particularly with respect to the suicidal ideation and hedonia. Thus, for further analysis patients were divided in two groups characterized by either the presence or absence of suicidal ideation or the level of hedonia. The symptom profiles of these subgroups will be discussed.