



## POSTER PRESENTATION

# Natural causes of death in persons with schizophrenia: review of European literature

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Schizophrenia is a chronic mental disorder which, apart from being associated with a significantly higher suicide risk when compared with the general population, is characterised by an increased risk of developing a comorbid somatic disease. Elevated mortality rate from natural causes of death in persons with schizophrenia is currently one of the most important challenges for mental health policy in Europe.

**Objectives:** We reviewed the current literature on this subject to establish what are the most prevalent causes of death in persons with schizophrenia in Europe and what are the mortality ratios for the respective natural causes of death.

**Methods:** We searched PubMed database for articles in English, using MeSH (heading: schizophrenia with subheading: mortality; combined with heading: Europe). Publication years were limited to 2009–2014. The articles were then analyzed in order to find relevant data regarding the natural causes of death in patients with schizophrenia.

**Results:** Fifty articles met the search criteria. Eleven of them concerned somatic comorbidity and mortality from natural causes in schizophrenia. According to the current data, the majority of schizophrenia patients die due to natural causes,

with cardiovascular diseases being prevalent among them. The patients are characterized by increased standardized mortality ratios for natural causes of death compared to general population, which contributes to the existence of mortality gap and reduced life expectancy.

**Discussion:** Compared to the data from the past decades, there were significant changes to the most frequent causes of death in persons with schizophrenia. Recent reviews of literature on this matter confirm our results: the leading causes of mortality in schizophrenia are currently natural causes, similar to those in general population.

**Conclusions:** Despite the elevated risk of suicide and other unnatural causes of death during the course of schizophrenia, the majority of persons with this diagnosis die due to natural causes, most frequently cardiovascular diseases. Despite the recent advances in treatment of psychotic disorders, there is still a significant mortality gap between the patients and general population, which is mainly a consequence of the excess mortality from natural causes. This issue warrants further attention from the researchers and health policy-makers.

**Supplementary material:** Complete presentation available at <http://ijcnmh.arc-publishing.org>

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