

Parricide and Psychopathology - a Review

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Introduction: Parricide is defined as the killing of one's father, mother or any other lawful ascendant. Parricide is a rare event and statistics indicate that accounts for less than 4% of all resolved homicides.

Objectives: To describe the most common psychiatric pathologies associated with parricide.

Methods: The authors performed a non systematic review of literature.

Results: Parricide is a crime committed essentially by males, and the most frequent form is patricid committed by sons. Parricidal offenders diagnosed with psychiatric diseases usually suffer from severe and prolonged mental illness, with clinical symptoms evidenced for years before they commit the crime. As risk factors for parricide, literature refers suffering from paranoid schizophrenia or an alcohol or drug abuse, associated with family and personal history of violence and mental illness, possible cessation of psychotropic medication, and lack of acceptance of the mental illness. Also the presence of a sexual component of the crime was reported. Relating to the symptoms that motive parricide, studies showed that the majority were persecutory paranoid delusions, involving delusional beliefs about the parent and other family members and occurred mostly in individuals with schizophrenia.

Conclusion: The literature about parricide is sparse and the majority of studies performed in parricide have a small sample, which difficult generalization. A great proportion, but not all adult parricidal offenders suffer from a major psychiatric disorder. However, the majority of individuals with severe mental disorders do not kill a parent, so risk factors for parricide among mentally ill adults need to be identified in order to prevent them.