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SUICIDE AND FATAL ALCOHOL POISONING AMONG RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION OF BELARUS

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Background: In most countries suicide rates are generally higher in rural than in urban areas. In many countries there has been a disproportionate increase in rural suicide contributing to greater rural/urban gradient. A wide range of factors, including social isolation, material deprivation and unfavorable changes in the demographic structure, have been cited as possible reasons for comparatively higher suicide rates in rural community. Given that alcohol abuse is a major risk factor for autoaggressive behavior, we assume that alcohol may be the reason behind rural/urban gradient in suicide.

Aim: The aim of this study was to examine the suicide and fatal alcohol poisoning rates (as a proxy for binge drinking) among rural and urban population of Belarus.

Method: Using country age-adjusted, gender-specific mortality data between 1990 and 2005, we estimated rural/urban differentials in suicide and fatal alcohol poisoning rates over time.

Results: Significant rural/urban gradient in suicide and fatal alcohol poisoning rates was found. The gradient increased consistently, suggesting widening rural/urban differentials across the period. The results of the correlation analysis indicate the presence of close association between the two variables for rural man and women.

Conclusion: The increase rural/urban gradient in suicide observed in this study might to some degree reflect differentials changes over time in the alcohol-related problems rate for rural and urban population.