

In people with chronic illnesses, the perceived impact of current Greek crisis is associated with suicidal risk only in those with greater depressive symptom burden



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INTRODUCTION

Suicide rates in Greece have been on a remarkable upward trend following the global recession of 2008 and the European sovereign debt crisis of 2009. **Recession and rises in unemployment rates have been found to be associated with suicide rates** [1]. Numerous studies concluded that the specific **austerity measures have been associated with increasing in suicides in Greece** [2-3].

OBJECTIVE

We aimed to assess the relationship between **perceived impact of the current social and financial crisis and suicidal risk** in people with long-term medical conditions (LTCs), and **whether this relationship is mediated by depressive symptom severity** after adjusting for confounders.

METHOD

In a cross-sectional design, **140 patients with diabetes, COPD and rheumatic diseases** attending routine follow-up clinics during a **4-month period** were interviewed with the MINI. We assessed the independent associations of perceived impact of current crisis with suicidality risk (**Risk Assessment of Suicidality Scale**) and whether **MINI diagnosis or depressive symptom severity (PHQ-9)** moderated this relationship in multiple and hierarchical regression models after adjusting for demographics and comorbidities.

FINDINGS

- **Twenty-seven patients (19.3%)** were considered **suicidal** and **37 (26.4%)** were diagnosed with **Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)** according to the MINI. (Fig.1)
- The perceived impact of current crisis was significantly associated with suicidal risk independent of demographics and comorbidities (Table 1) (**b=0.194, p=0.027**).
- Moderation analysis showed that **the current crisis influences suicidality risk only in those patients with greater depressive symptom burden as assessed by the PHQ-9 (p<0.01)** (Fig. 2)

CONCLUSION

Psychopathology is high in people with long-term medical conditions in the era of the current Greek social and financial crisis. Even though, however, the association between recession and suicidality has been previously evidenced, **present findings indicate that the perceived impact of crisis is associated with suicidality risk only in those with greater depressive symptom burden**. A key policy priority should therefore be planned for the care of people with LTCs presented with severe depressive symptoms, if we are to alleviate the consequences of the current Greek social and financial crisis.

References:

- [1] Antonakakis et al (2014). The impact of fiscal austerity on suicide: on the empirics of a modern Greek tragedy. *Social science & medicine*, 112, 39-50.
 [2] Branas et al. (2015). The impact of economic austerity and prosperity events on suicide in Greece: a 30-year interrupted time-series analysis. *BMJ*, 5(1).
 [3] Kentikelenis, et al. (2014). Greece's health crisis: from austerity to denialism. *The Lancet*, 383(9918), 748-753.

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Figure 1. Mental Illness of patients with chronic illnesses according to MINI.

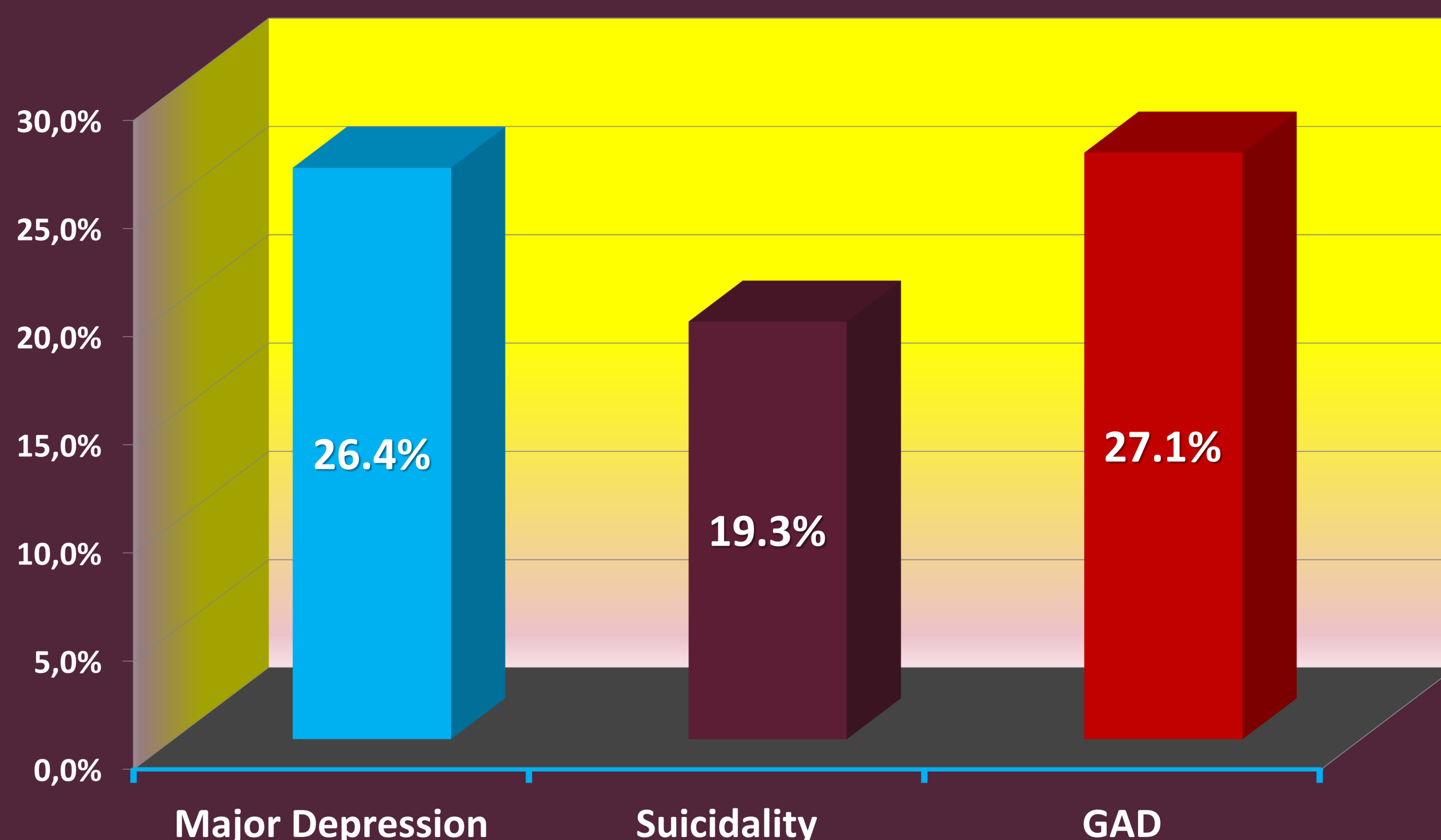


Table 1. Factors most closely associated with suicidal risk (Multiple Regression Analysis with dependent variable the RASS)

	Beta	P - Values
Impact of crisis	.194	.027
Age	.070	.256
Sex	-.110	.074
PHQ9	.692	.000

Figure 2. Impact of crisis and suicidality across MDD diagnoses (Moderation analysis)

