

Mortality due to external incidents in cearences military police: a time analysis from 2011 to 2021

Mortalidade por agravos externos em polícias militares cearenses: uma análise temporal de 2011 a 2021

Mortalidad por incidentes externos en cearencias policia militar: un análisis del tiempo desde 2011 hasta 2021

RESUMO

Objetivo: conhecer o perfil epidemiológico dos policiais militares do estado Ceará que foram a óbito entre os anos de 2011 e 2021 por causas externas de morbimortalidade. **Método:** Estudo ecológico, série temporal a partir dos óbitos registrados no Sistema de Informações sobre Mortalidade. Amostra foi composta por policiais militares que foram a óbito entre os anos de 2011 e 2021, por Causas externas de morbimortalidade no Ceará, ambos os sexos, todos os postos e graduações. Utilizou-se o software Microsoft Excel® 2010, para manipulação dos dados, e o Epi Info™ para as estatísticas descritivas. **Resultado:** Amostra resultou em 283 agentes, na grande maioria homens, brancos, de 30 a 39 anos, casados, soldados, que foram a óbito devido a agressões, em via pública, no mês de janeiro, à noite, aos sábados. **Conclusão:** É possível observar mudanças no perfil epidemiológico de mortalidade no país, sobretudo em regiões onde a violência está presente.

DESCRITORES: Mortalidade; Polícia; Militares; Epidemiologia.

ABSTRACT

Objective: to know the epidemiological profile of military police officers in the state of Ceará who died between 2011 and 2021 from external causes of morbidity and mortality **Method:** Ecological study, time series from deaths registered in the Mortality Information System. The sample consisted of military police officers who died between 2011 and 2021 from external causes of morbidity and mortality in Ceará, both sexes, all ranks, and grades. Microsoft Excel® 2010 software was used for data manipulation and Epi Info™ for descriptive statistics. **Result:** The sample consisted of 283 officers, mostly men, white, 30 to 39 years old, married, soldiers, who died due to assaults, on public roads, in the month of January, at night, on Saturdays. **Conclusion:** It is possible to observe changes in the epidemiological profile of mortality in the country, especially in regions where violence is present.

DESCRIPTORS: Mortality; Police; Military; Epidemiology.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Conocer el perfil epidemiológico de los policías militares del estado de Ceará fallecidos entre 2011 y 2021 por causas externas de morbimortalidad. **Método:** Estudio ecológico, serie temporal basada en las defunciones registradas en el Sistema de Información de Mortalidad. La muestra estuvo constituida por policías militares fallecidos entre 2011 y 2021 por causas externas de morbilidad y mortalidad en Ceará, de ambos sexos, todos los rangos y grados. Se utilizó el software Microsoft Excel® 2010 para la manipulación de los datos y Epi Info™ para la estadística descriptiva. **Resultados:** La muestra fue constituida por 283 agentes, en su gran mayoría hombres, blancos, con edad entre 30 y 39 años, casados, soldados, que murieron como consecuencia de asaltos en la vía pública en enero, en la noche de los sábados. **Conclusión:** Es posible observar cambios en el perfil epidemiológico de la mortalidad en el país, especialmente en las regiones donde la violencia está presente.

DESCRIPTORES: Mortalidad; Policía; Militar; Epidemiología.

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Mortalidade por agravos externos em polícias militares cearences: uma análise temporal de 2011 a 2021

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INTRODUCTION

There are professions that carry a substantial risk, both epidemiological and social, which significantly increases the health conditions and quality of life of the population. In this scenario, the police activity stands out, in view of its differentiated way of working and living, with the constant need to maintain a state of alert, even at times when they are not working⁽¹⁾.

When it comes to illness in military corporations, it is necessary to understand that working in this group is not limited to the conception of performing a specialized and remunerated professional activity, going beyond this conception, creating a true bond of identification between the subject and his source of income⁽²⁾.

The World Health Organization (WHO) already considers professional stress as a global epidemic, this fact is no different with the military police activity, which is daily exposed to occupational unhealthiness and daily violence,

which is increasingly barbaric. However, the Military Police Officer (MP) believes that he needs to pass the image that is usually attributed to him of "iron man", which prevents him from exposing his feelings and seeking help, causing aggravations to his mental health⁽³⁾.

According to the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook (2016), between 2009 and 2015, about 2,572 officers were killed in Brazil, a number higher than all countries. Police work has been carried out by men, since the functions of surveillance, protection and repression demand characteristics such as physical strength, courage, combat, action and detachment, which would not be present in women⁽⁴⁾, causing many men not to perform some health care due to prejudice, opting for alcoholism, smoking and violence, which are also interrelated with gender issues⁽⁵⁾.

The PM lives in a position of constant alert, arising from the various risk situations to which he is exposed, living with danger, dealing with crimes of all kinds, generalized violence, and daily

observing the cruelest face of man, which is revealed by contempt for the life of others. Thus, stress comes to exist for the agent as a preparation of the body to withstand these situations. It is noteworthy that the person who is subjected to constantly stressful occasions is more likely to suffer from psychological problems, and may be affected by depression, Burnout syndrome, anxiety, panic attacks, among others, and the absence of treatment can cause irreparable damage to the individual's psychological health, resulting in extreme cases, such as suicide^(3,6).

The constant pressure these professionals experience can alter their normal way of acting and thinking, leading to feelings of fear, flight, despair, and even troubled thinking, making it difficult for them to carry out day-to-day activities and establish priorities⁽⁷⁾.

As observed, the physical and mental problems of military police officers can be explained by the constant stress arising from the profession itself, associated with exhausting working hours, insecurity

ty, fear of death, among others. In view of the above, the objective is to know the epidemiological profile of military police officers in the state of Ceará who died between 2011 and 2021 from external causes of morbidity and mortality.

METHODS

This is an ecological time series study based on deaths recorded in the Mortality Information System (SIM), made available electronically by the Health Surveillance Secretariat of the Ministry of Health (SVS/MS). The sample consisted of military police officers who died in the state of Ceará, both squares and officers, of both sexes due to external causes of morbidity and mortality, between 2011 and 2021.

The data used for the research are secondary and were extracted from SIM, from the state of Ceará. About the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO), were taken from the Ministry of Labor and Employment. Considering the information from PMCE, these data come from the Secretariat of Public Security and Social Defense (SS-PDS) of Ceará Mortality information comes from Death Certificates (DO), implemented since 1976, which feed the SIM, as well as being used by registry offices to issue Death Certificates.

The causes of death were analyzed according to the chapters of the International Code of Diseases (ICD-10). Absolute and relative frequencies were calculated for the qualitative variables. For quantitative data, calculation of measures of central tendency and dispersion. Microsoft Excel® 2010 software was used for data manipulation and Epi Info™ software, version 7, for descriptive statistics.

The research met all the recommendations of Resolution No. 466/2012 of the National Health Council (CNS), which regulates and creates the guidelines that must be respected for the elaboration of scientific research. As the data are in the public domain, the

opinion of a Research Ethics Committee (REC) is justified as unnecessary due to the impossibility of identifying individuals.

RESULTS

Considering the mortality of the PMCE, between the years 2011 and 2021, by External causes of morbidity and mortality (V01-Y98), a sample of 283 agents is observed. When compared with all causes of death among this population in the same period (n=709), external factors accounted for 39.8% of all deaths. Of these, the vast majority were male (98.6%), of white color/race (17.0%), however, 21.6% of death certificates (DC) left this field unanswered.

Regarding age group, the most prevalent was 30 to 39 years (33.6%), followed by 40 to 49 years (31.1%), married (54.1%), undergraduate soldier (57.2%). Regarding the cause of death (GRAPH 01), 43.5% was due to assault, followed by traffic accident (25.1%), on public roads (39.0%), in January (10.6%), at night (27.2%), on Saturday (19.4%).

Regarding the city of occurrence, it was decided to divide by commands and battalions, presenting the highest

prevalence for the 1st Regional Military Police Command (CRPM), being located in greater Fortaleza (n=151); followed by the 2nd CRPM, located in the Metropolitan region (n=126), in the 12th Military Police Battalion (BPM) in Caucaia (n=56).

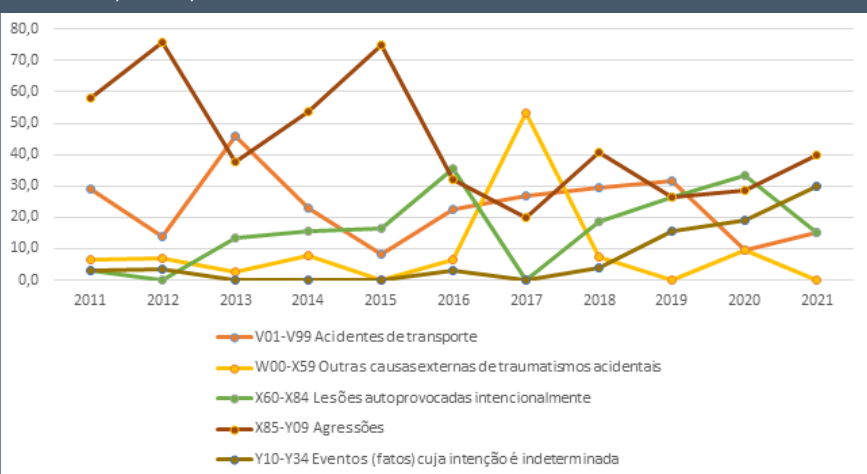
It is important to note that, due to the limitations of the fields and/or completion of death certificates, some information was not possible to measure, such as whether the police officer was on duty or off duty, clinical condition in which the agents arrived at the health units, location affected by the bullet projectile, among others.

DISCUSSION

On Brazilian soil there are approximately 86 police corporations, however, they act without any standardization or federal coordination, the agents respond directly to the state government. However, even among the state corporations that have the largest number of personnel, with more than 406,000 MPs on active duty, the patterns and forms of action are very different⁽⁸⁾.

Soon it is not only a reality of the PMCE, but other states also have high mortality rates among military agents

Graph 01 - Distribution of mortality among Military Police Officers of Ceará by external causes of morbidity and mortality (V01-Y98), 2011 to 2021. Fortaleza, Ceará, 2022



Source: Mortality Information System (MIS), 2022.

arising from this injury but varying widely in Brazilian corporations. Mortality from violence in Rio de Janeiro is estimated to be 6.44 times higher in military police compared to municipal guards, and 1.72 times higher than in civilian police⁽⁹⁾.

The Amapá Military Police, in 2021 alone, accounted for 31.8% of all Intentional Violent Deaths (IVD) in the state, however, when compared to the Federal District police officers, it is observed that the agents were responsible for only 2.3% of IVD in the same year, thus showing that it is not a reality of our entire country. These deaths occurred on weekends, Saturdays, and Sundays⁽¹⁰⁾, data similar to this research where Saturday and Sunday represented 33.6% of the sample.

Regarding the type of instrument used, the same study shows that firearms remain the main tool to commit crimes, representing 98.4% of Deaths Resulting from Police Intervention (MDIP); 75.0% were intentional homicides; 65.9% were robberies; and 11.0% corresponded to bodily injuries followed by death.

A similar study was carried out in São Paulo, between 2013 and 2014, 148 MPs were victimized in the period analyzed, of which 118 military police officers (79.73%) were off duty and 30 (20.27%), on duty. Most victims were white (56.76%), married (50.68%), aged between 41 and 50 years (35.14%), on public roads (45.10%), and by firearm (84.46%). Among homicides, robbery (33.0%) is the main cause. In absolute terms, soldiers die the most, followed by corporals. It is noteworthy that some fields were left blank, namely: 15.54% of the cases had no information regarding the race/color category; and 20.27% of the records the marital status was not informed.⁽¹¹⁾

Self-inflicted violence accounted for 15.2% of total deaths among PMCE officers in the study period. It is known that suicide among police officers and its risk factors is a little

known and discussed topic in Brazil, despite its relevance and incidence. Among the main symptoms of psychological distress among military personnel, they reported sleeping poorly (53.5%), feeling nervous or agitated (47.5%) and feeling sad (39%). And those in lower ranks also add working under pressure, spending a lot of time on the street and having few meals.⁽¹²⁾

Corroborating this idea, another study pointed out the main symptoms for self-inflicted violence, namely: stressful factors inherent to police activity; social pressures; use of alcohol and other drugs; physical and mental illness; advanced age; imminent retirement; dissatisfaction with one's profession; hierarchical relationship between superior and subordinate police officers; low level of trust among co-workers; marital conflicts; problems in the workplace appear associated with suicidal behavior among police officers⁽¹³⁾.

In the period from January 2013 to July 2016, 21 military police officers committed suicide in Paraná. The sample was composed mostly of soldiers, 67.0% of whom were soldiers. Most of them were male, in the age range of 41-50 years, and married. Regarding functional status, 76.0% were in active service and of these, 69.0% worked in operational activities⁽¹⁴⁾.

The same authors point out that the fact that police officers have access to firearms makes them easy targets for self-injury. Corroborating this idea, other studies show that military police officers were carrying firearms when they died. Therefore, it can be said that carrying a firearm does not guarantee survival and can often even contribute to the victimization of the PM.⁽¹⁵⁻¹⁶⁾

Another study found that suicidal military police officers in Santa Catarina, from 2012 to 2016, predominated in the 40-47 age group. The majority were male, married, white, with children and up to high school education,

and self-extermination predominated among police officers in the ranks and closer to retirement. In the analyzed period, the year 2015 presented the highest occurrence of suicides (71.42%), a data that differs from this research, since in the PMCE the highest prevalence was in 2016 with 31.5% of the cases.⁽¹⁷⁾

The aforementioned study also shows that 42.86% of the PM who committed suicide were in the last decade of their career in the institution. The majority (85.71%) were career squares, especially soldiers ($n = 7$). None of the suicidal police officers had disciplinary conduct problems since the vast majority had excellent disciplinary behavior and no punishment in a period of eight years of effective service. The most common place to commit suicide was the home (42.86% of cases). The most common method for suicide was firearm, occurring in 5 (35.71%) cases, followed by hanging, with 4 (28.57%) cases⁽¹⁸⁾. Considering the sample of this study, the DCs do not contain information regarding the method used, and location performed.

It is noteworthy that there is a higher incidence of death of military police officers in the rank of square, especially at the beginning of their career, such as soldiers followed by corporals. As an explanation it is suggested that PMs, as soon as they graduate, are deployed to operational activities and, over time, are allocated to more administrative activities⁽¹¹⁾.

It is noteworthy that, considering the military corporation, police officers are a vulnerable and susceptible population to present various symptoms of psychological suffering, when compared to the rest of society, since their work activity requires a high degree of discipline, leaving them more exposed to a scenario of constant risk, pressure, tension and institutional collection, especially those who work in subordinate positions. On the other hand, society is still cited, which usually sees these professionals as corrupt,

unprepared, devoid of feelings, consequently, treating them with hostility, further implying the social isolation of these professionals. However, before being a police officer, he is a human being, who may be in pain⁽¹⁶⁾.

In Bahia, between 2012 and 2019, 110 military police officers were killed by Intentional Lethal Violent Crimes (CVLI), of which 77 (70.0%) were classified as homicide, 31 (28.18%) as robbery and two (1.81%) as bodily injury followed by death. The majority of CVLI deaths occurred in officers aged between 40 and 49, in soldiers, while off-duty, on Thursday and on public roads. The study data shows that 94.54% of military police deaths were due to the use of a firearm⁽¹⁸⁾.

It is noted the importance of developing public policies aimed at preventing and directing not only government entities, but the population itself, as well as the development of research

that tries to demystify the social image of the military police, which has been built throughout history, with a view to making the population aware so that they look in an empathetic and humanized way, as well as improving the quality of life of military police officers.

As well as the importance of creating programs aimed at working on the mental health of these agents, aiming to reduce the rates of mental illness, and especially suicide. Police officers need to recognize themselves as human beings susceptible to illness, so corporations need to be prepared to act in order to prevent health problems, especially of a mental nature, diagnose and properly treat those with mental symptoms, ensuring anonymity, monitoring professionals, seeking the best quality of life and work.

CONCLUSION

Over the years it is possible to observe changes in the epidemiological profile of mortality in the country, especially in regions where cases of violence and aggression are present, mainly due to the fact that the public most affected by these diseases is composed of young adult males, a stage of life in which they should be studying and/or producing.

In addition, it is emphasized that these are preventable causes, but they do not depend exclusively on public policies related to improvements in the social conditions of individuals, such as safety, but rather on behavioral and cultural changes, then going through all government public agencies and reaching society as a whole. As well as the social and economic costs related to these preventable deaths are extremely high, therefore, the importance of this theme and studies focused on this subject is noted in order to minimize these numbers.

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