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The possible effect of altitude on regional variation in suicide rates

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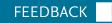
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Summary

In the United States, suicide rates consistently vary among geographic regions; the western states have significantly higher suicide rates than the eastern states. The reason for this variation is unknown but may be due to regional elevation differences. States' suicide rates (1990–1994), when adjusted for potentially confounding demographic variables, are positively correlated with their peak and capital elevations. These findings indicate that decreased oxygen saturation at high altitude may exacerbate the bioenergetic dysfunction associated with affective illnesses. Should such a link exist, therapies traditionally used to treat the metabolic disturbances associated with altitude sickness may have a role in treating those at risk for suicide.

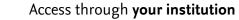


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