Characteristics of Mothers Whose Infants Died of Suffocation
Katerina Ivanova

In the Czech Republic, infant mortality has been extremely low for years (2.39% in 2015). This makes it easy to trace the cases when the infant’s death was not of natural causes. The aim of the research was to determine the common characteristics of mothers, whose infants (children under 1 year of age) suddenly and unexpectedly died of suffocation.

Methods
The research method was the retrospective content analysis of autopsy reports (n = 18) of infants, who were dissected because of unclear death mechanism, over a period of 5 years (2011-2015) at the Faculty of Medicine, Palacky University. The records of infants who died of suffocation (n = 11) were further processed as a series of case report. The features of analysis that indicated the common characteristics of mothers were emphasized. The case reports were divided as follows - violent death of the infant (n = 6), neglect as the cause of infant’s death (n = 5).

Results
The following common characteristics of mothers were revealed in the group of infants who died of suffocation – insufficient attention paid to the child, low social-economic status, loneliness, situation underestimation, low or nonexistent social support, unwanted pregnancy, unsatisfactory accommodation conditions, substance abuse, insufficient nutrition. Characteristic features of mothers who directly caused the infant’s death included life without the child’s father, lack of interest of the social surroundings, poor accommodation conditions. In the cases of child’s death caused by neglect, it was characteristic for the mothers to have problematic life style, provide insufficient care for the child, be lonely, and have low health literacy related to the inability to timely and correctly assess the gravity of the situation which requires medical help.

Conclusions
Significant risk factors of infants’ death included low health literacy and the life style of mothers. The burdensome life situation of the mothers however was even more significant.

Key messages:
- It can be stated that the more difficult the life situation of the mother is combined with low health literacy, the higher risk of the infant’s death of suffocation.
- It is necessary to pay greater attention to the risk factors of lonely mothers not only by the health and social workers but also with respect to community care.