

Just the Facts

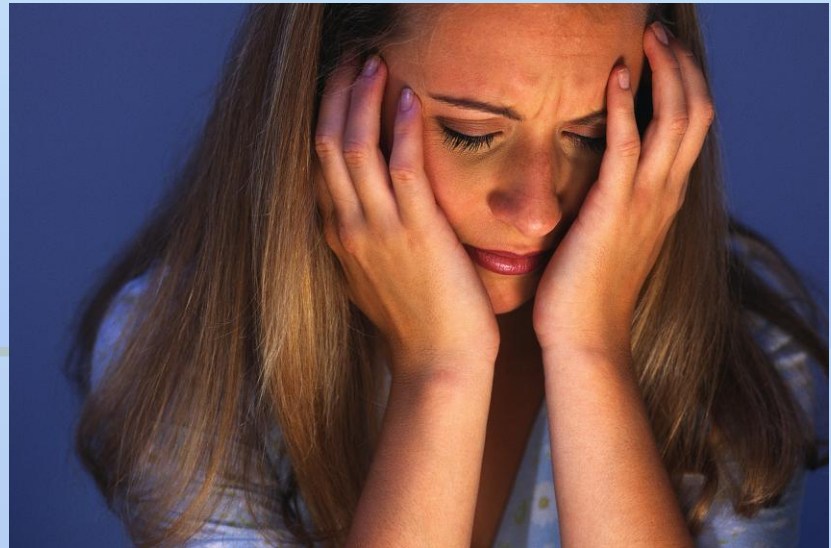
Part Two:

Risk Factors

What to be thinking about as you are getting all the facts.

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SUICIDE



Facts About Suicide

- Suicide is the 9th leading cause of death
- Approximately 30,000 Americans die of suicide each year
- The number of attempted suicides is estimated to be 650,000
- There are about 85 suicides a day in this country about 1 every 20 min
- Suicide by firearm is the most common method for both men and women, accounting for 61 % of all suicides
- Approximately 80% of the individuals who attempt or commit suicide DO give some indication of their impending action
- There are approximately 8-25 attempts to one completion
- The highest rate of suicide is for persons over the age of 65
(SMC Training handouts)

Suicide Risk Factors

- A family history with a mental or substance abuse disorder
- Family history of suicide
- Family violence including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse
- Recent or perceived loss (not just death) of a friend, family member, pet, or a breakup of a relationship.

Suicide Risk Factors

- Firearms in the home
- Incarceration
- Exposure to the suicide of others, including family, peers and/or media news or fiction (The closer the relative, the greater the risk)
- Acute intoxication

(SMC Training handouts)

Suicide Warning Signs

- A change in habits (sleeping, eating, studying, activity level, sexual activity, job)
- Giving away prized possessions
- Increase in drug or alcohol abuse
- Depression
- Talking about suicide or threats to commit suicide (implied or explicit)
- Cutting off friendships- isolation

Suicide Warning Signs Cont.

- Reckless/thrill-seeking behavior
 - Expressing helplessness or an “I don’t care” attitude
 - Feeling life is less meaningful, hopeless
 - Preoccupation with death
 - Making arrangements, setting one's affairs in order
 - Command hallucinations
- (SMC Training handouts)

SAD PERSONS Scale

- **S- Sex**
- **A- Age**
- **D- Depression**
- **P- Previous Attempt**
- **E- ETOH or other drug use**
- **R- Rational Thinking**
- **S- Social Supports**
- **O- Organized Plan**
- **N- No Spouse**
- **S- Sickness**

Patterson 1983

Myths Related to Suicide

- People who commit suicide always leave notes
- People who are serious about suicide don't warn others
- People who talk about suicide are just trying to get attention. They won't really do it
- Once someone has already decided to commit suicide, nothing is going to stop them
- Once the emotional state improves, the risk of suicide is over
- After a person has attempted suicide, it is unlikely they will try again
- Don't mention suicide to someone who's showing signs of severe depression. It will plant the idea in their minds and they will act on it
- An unsuccessful attempt means the person wasn't serious about ending their life

(SMC Training handouts)

Risk Factors and Addiction

- Studies have shown that there is an increased suicide risk among individuals who abuse substances.
- The suicide rate for persons who are heroin dependent is about 20 times the rate for the general population
- High correlation between addiction and other mental illnesses as well as personality disorders

Substance Abuse and Suicidality

- Among completed suicides in persons under age 30, the majority had a principal diagnosis of substance abuse
- Substance abuse with a co-occurring disorder increases the risk of suicide
- More than 90% of suicidal, intoxicated individuals are no longer suicidal upon reaching sobriety

Weiss 1999

Alcoholism

- One-quarter of all emergency room admissions, one-third of all suicides, and more than half of all homicides and incidents of domestic violence are alcohol-related.

“Sobering Facts on the Dangers of Alcohol”,
NY Newsday, April 24, 2002.



Relationship between suicide and mental illness

- The presence of a severe psychiatric disorder, such as major depression, is probably the single strongest statistical correlate with suicide risk
- Major depression leads the pack, followed by schizophrenia and individuals with Borderline and Anti-social personality disorder

Psychosis as a Risk Factor

- Psychosis should be considered a potentially major suicide factor, because rational thought often acts as the final obstacle to self-destruction
- Any evidence of psychosis warrants a thorough evaluation of lethality
- Command hallucinations
- Feelings of alien control
- Religious preoccupation

Sadock 2003

VIOLENCE TO OTHERS

Things to consider

- Dangerousness is typically a temporary state along a continuum: low to high risk
- Strong tendency to overestimate risk
- Must be aware of our own personal biases to make sure they are not causing us to overestimate the risk

Risk factors and Violence

- History of Violence is #1
- Substance abuse
- Active psychosis- not chronic
- Young age <30
- Antisocial personality disorder



Dynamic factors

- Degree of organization
- Degree of desperation and/or despair
- Recent losses: perceived or real
- Concern by significant others of follow-through of threat
- Active paranoid delusions
- Anger
- Impulsivity
- TBI

(SMC Training handouts)

Children

- Population studies show that at any one time between 10 and 15 % of the child and adolescent population has some symptoms of depression
- After age 15, depression is twice as common in girls and women as in boys and men

(SMC Training handouts)



SPECIAL POPULATIONS

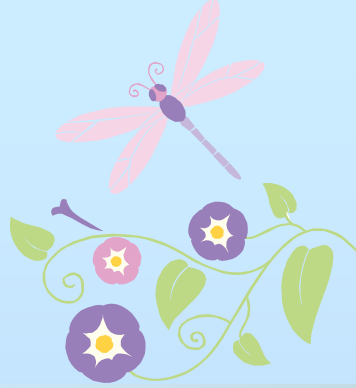
Suicide Rates and Children



- The suicide rate is rising among young persons, particularly males age 15 to 24.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death in the 15 to 24 yr old age group, after accidents and homicides
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents
- In 1995, 330 children ages 10 to 14 killed themselves and 7 children, ages 5 to 9, committed suicide
- Attempted suicides in the 15 to 24 yr old group is between 1 million and 2 million annually

Shea 1999

Geriatric



- Elderly persons have a higher risk for suicide than any other population
- 1/3 of elderly persons report loneliness as the principal reason for considering suicide
- 10% of elderly with suicidal ideation report financial problems, poor medical health, or depression as reasons for suicidal thoughts
- Most elderly persons who commit suicide communicate their suicidal thoughts to family or friends prior to the act of suicide

Steffens 1999

Native Americans

- The Native American male adolescent and young adult suicide rate in Indian Health Service Areas was the highest in the Nation, with a suicide rate of 62.0 per 100,000

(SMC Training handouts)

Psychiatric Emergencies

- Mood Disorders
 - Depressive episodes
 - Manic episodes
- Schizophrenia
- Alcohol Dependence

- About 40% of all patients seen in psychiatric emergency rooms require hospitalization
- The greatest potential error in emergency room psychiatry is overlooking a physical illness as the cause of an emotional illness

Reference List

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