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Youth Suicide: Risks and Prevention

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Scope of the Problem: Suicide Deaths, World-wide

“Every year, almost one million people die from suicide.... one death every 40 seconds.”

World Health Organization, 2012
Scope of the Problem: Youth Suicide Deaths, U.S.

- In 2010, suicide ranked as the *third leading* cause of death for young people (ages 15-24); only accidents and homicides occurred more frequently.

- 4,600 people between the ages of 15 and 24 died by suicide in 2010.

- There are about 13 youth suicides each day.
Suicide Deaths Among Youth Ages 15-24 (1968-2010), U.S.A.
Scope of the Problem: Suicide Ideation/Behavior

- 15.8% of U.S. high school students seriously consider attempting suicide and 7.8% attempt suicide during a 12-month period (YRBS, 2011).

- U.S. Latina girls have the highest rates of feeling sad and hopeless, seriously considering suicide, making a suicide plan AND attempting suicide when compared to whites and blacks (YRBS, 2011).
Suicide Death Rates by Age, 2010 (USA)

Rate per 100,000

Youth Suicide Prevention Research

The major aim of my research is to enhance the identification of youth at risk for suicide and promote evidence-based prevention interventions.

Specific projects involve the:

- **Identification of suicide risk factors**: bullying; sensation-seeking; contagion/cluster suicides; exposure to suicide in media

- **Evaluation of suicide prevention programs**: school-based screening; school-based skills training; telephone crisis services and post-crisis follow-up; crisis chat and texting services

- **Enhancement of access to mental healthcare**: identification of barriers to mental health care, and strategies to overcome these barriers
HOW DOES A SUICIDE OCCUR?

UNDERLYING VULNERABILITY

e.g.: Mood Disorder / Substance Abuse / Aggression / Anxiety / Impulsivity / Sexual Orientation / Abnormal Serotonin Metabolism / Family Characteristics, including history of suicidal behavior / Sexual Abuse / Physical Abuse / Social adversity

STRESS EVENT

(often caused by underlying condition)

e.g.: In Trouble With Law or School / Loss / Bullied

ACUTE MOOD CHANGE

e.g.: Anxiety – Dread / Hopelessness / Anger

INHIBITION

e.g.: Family cohesion / Religiosity / Available Support / Help-seeking attitudes Media displays / Internet

SURVIVAL

FACILITATION

e.g.: Method / Weapon available / Recent example / Contagion Media displays / Internet

SUICIDE
PREVENTION STRATEGIES

UNDERLYING VULNERABILITY

Casefinding
- Find affected individual
- Provide effective treatment

Screening, Gatekeeper training

STRESS EVENT

Casefinding/Crisis intervention
- Crisis hotline

ACUTE MOOD CHANGE

INHIBITION
- Casefinding/Crisis intervention
- Crisis hotline

Risk Factor Reduction

- Media education
- Restriction of firearms/lethal means
- Resilience development/skills training
- Postvention/Crisis intervention

SURVIVAL

FACILITATION

SUICIDE
Youth Suicide: Conclusion

• Suicide is Preventable

• YOU CAN ASK ABOUT SUICIDE-it will not put ideas into someone’s head

• Suicide prevention requires effort and commitment from all of us

  e.g., National Action Alliance For Suicide Prevention – The Public-Private Partnership Advancing the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention

  http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/
HOPE FOR DEPRESSION
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