Effective youth suicide prevention: evidence from Kentucky

Dessi Slavova, Hatim Omar
Division of Adolescent Medicine and Young Parents Program, Kentucky University.
Address for correspondence: haomar2@uky.edu

Chapter III

Methodology 2: a holistic prevention programme

Effective public health prevention of youth suicide is focused on reducing suicide risk factors. One of the main issues in suicide prevention is that we are not so confident about what the risk factors might be. Certainly over the last few decades a long list of factors has been cited as contributory risk factors ranging from morbidity, life events such as break ups, bereavement, employment issues, poor nutrition, mental illness and depression. However, in devising suicide prevention strategies the emphasis has firmly been on the latter, i.e. mental illness. A holistic suicide prevention strategy/action plan targets not just the person at risk but will also include the person's immediate and wider family and social networks. See the following video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14EviBKx2Ms&authuser=0

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWzcM6xB2NM&authuser=0

The suicide prevention programme shown follows an action research type approach. The programme outcomes are based on those individuals and communities who choose to seek help or participate in the programme. One aim is to explore the programme's impact on the wider community in Kentucky compared with the rest of US where suicide prevention mainly follow a medical model, i.e. looking for mental illness symptoms and refer to mental health services. Although the suicide prevention programme's records do not lend themselves for such an analysis, there is comprehensive data available which allows the comparison of a number of behavior measures of interest over time, such as perceptions, attitudes, bullying, hopelessness, and suicide ideation. This data set is described in the next Chapter.