Impact of Suicide

The Indian Health Service (IHS) Division of Behavioral Health

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Objectives

• Gain knowledge on types of lethal behavior.
• Able to assign lethality levels to behavior.
• Able to assign risk levels to suicidal behavior.
The Clinician’s Task

- Is not to predict suicide, but rather to recognize when a patient has entered into a heightened state of risk (risk assessment) and to respond appropriately. At its best, risk assessment both estimates the risk of suicidal behavior and explains it when used in a consistent fashion for all patients, providing a template for clinical management of any crisis, as well as short- and long-term treatment targets. (Bryan & Rudd, 2006).
Components of a Suicide Risk Assessment

- Look for Warning Signs
- Identify Risk Factors
- Identify Protective Factors
- Conduct Suicide Inquiry
- **Determine Risk Level/Intervention**
- Document
Lethality

- Types of methods
  - Firearm
  - Suffocation
  - Asphyxiation
  - Poisoning/overdose
  - Cutting/pierce
- Individual concepts of lethality
- Lethality vs. risk
Risk Categories

- Continuum of suicide
- Chronic vs. acute
- Categories
  - Baseline
  - Acute
  - Chronic
  - Chronic with acute exacerbation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level</th>
<th>Risk/Protective Factor</th>
<th>Suicidality</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Psychiatric diagnosis with severe symptoms, or acute precipitating event; protective factors not relevant</td>
<td>Potentially lethal suicide attempt or persistent ideation with strong intent or suicide preparation, rehearsal</td>
<td>Admission generally indicated unless a significant change reduces risk. Suicide precautions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Multiple risk factors, few protective factors</td>
<td>Suicidal ideation with plan, but no intent or behavior</td>
<td>Admission may be necessary depending on risk factors. Safety plan, and crisis numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Modifiable risk factors, strong protective factors</td>
<td>Thoughts of death or no plan intent or behavior</td>
<td>Outpatient referral, symptom reduction. Give crisis numbers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clinical Decision-Making

- Admission vs. outpatient treatment
- Safety planning
- Crisis number
- Family education
Citations

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