

Suicide (Prevention) Notes

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Conclusion: Contrary to a long-held assumption, suicidal ideation and attempts do occur in individuals with developmental disorders/intellectual disability. Mental health professionals should be aware of and assess for these behaviors in this population.

Title of Paper: "A Review of Suicidality in Persons with Intellectual Disability"

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NOTE: Due to copyright laws, we are unable to provide the full article.

The Study: : Is a review of the literature documenting the presence of suicidal ideation/behavior in individuals with intellectual disability including symptomatology, risk factors, screening and intervention.

Results:

1. Very limited literature available, most based on case reports or retrospective studies.
2. Suicidal ideation and/or attempts may be present at all ages, in males and females, at all levels of intellectual disability - more commonly in mild and moderate - and be present with all possible co-morbid psychiatric disorders.
3. Risk factors are similar/same as with individuals without intellectual disability: abuse, family instability, stress/depression, limited/lack of social support, loneliness, anxiety, hopelessness.
4. Methods of suicide considered/attempted parallel those of the non-disabled population.
5. Limited research on intervention. Important factors: pharmacotherapy, psychotherapies, amelioration of risk factors, development of a crisis plan.

Discussion:

1. Awareness is paramount. It is easy to overlook suicide risk in those with intellectual disability.
2. Assessment is often difficult given communication impairment(s). Individuals eagerness to please and hesitancy to disclose information must be considered.
3. Assessment instrument is helpful along with collateral info. from other informants.

Question for further consideration:

1. How can we overcome the tendency of such individuals to under report suicidal ideation because of a desire to please the interviewer?

NOTE: Each issue of "Suicide (Prevention) Notes" is prepared by a member of the IOL's Executive Committee.
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