



Title	Suicide Prevention Strategies: Evidence from Systematic Reviews
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Aim

To identify what types of suicide prevention (SP) strategies have been evaluated in the research and to determine which suicide prevention strategies are effective.

Conclusions and results

Ten systematic reviews published since 1990 were analyzed: 2 covered a wide range of SP strategies, 3 focused on school-based SP strategies for adolescents, and 5 focused on psychological/ pharmacological treatments for highly suicidal patients. Three of the ten reviews received a 'good' quality rating. Nearly thirty types of SP strategies have been evaluated in the research, and more than half fall into the 'treatment' category of the prevention framework. The evidence was insufficient to ascertain whether any single prevention strategy was more effective than another in reducing suicide rates. The 3 'good' quality systematic reviews found that school-based prevention programs directed toward at-risk students enhanced protective factors and reduced risk factors and suicidal behavior. Findings from small clinical studies suggested that some psychological/pharmacological treatments, such as problem-solving, provision of an emergency contact card, dialectical behavior therapy, flupenthixol administration, and cognitive behavior therapy were promising in reducing rates of repeated self-harm among suicide attempters. The authors of the reviews noted many methodological limitations in the research.

Recommendations

Limited evidence indicated that no single strategy appeared to be effective in reducing suicide rates. School-based prevention strategies directed toward at-risk students were promising in enhancing protective factors and reducing suicide behavior and risk factors. Some psychological/ pharmacological treatments reduced rates of repeated self-harm in patients who had previously attempted suicide. Given that suicide is complex and multifaceted, a broad array of suicide prevention strategies addressing different risk factors at

various levels will be required to achieve an overall reduction in the population's long-term suicide rate.

Methods

This was a qualitative systematic review of systematic reviews. One researcher extracted data from the reviews, and two researchers independently assessed the methodological quality of the reviews. Suicide prevention strategies identified from the reviews were presented in a prevention framework that incorporated prevention (universal, selective, and indicated), treatment (case identification and standard treatment), and maintenance (compliance and after-care).

Further research/reviews required

Future research challenges include: standardizing assessment protocols for identifying at-risk populations, developing universal definitions for suicide-related terms, and defining formally validated outcome measures. It may also be necessary to develop a conceptual framework when planning and establishing provincial suicide prevention strategies.