

National Forum on Suicide Prevention

14th March 2006

Burlington Hotel, Dublin

Suicide Prevention Strategies

Some recent evidence

Geoff Day

Head of the National Office for Suicide Prevention

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WHO

‘WHO is committed to using knowledge gained from appropriate review of existing knowledge of research (including systematic review) that has implications for health improvement, to participating in the generation of essential tools, and to evaluating the quality and usefulness of interventions, methodologies and programmes’

Reach Out p. 8

‘The strategy draws, where possible, on published scientific research and on the experience of those working in suicide prevention.’

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- Suicide Prevention Strategies – J. John Mann et al 2005
- Suicide Prevention – A Pragmatic Review of Recent Studies – Robert D. Goldney 2005.

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WHO – 1993

Six basic steps for suicide prevention

- The treatment of psychiatric patients
- Gun possession control
- Detoxification of domestic gas
- Detoxification of car emissions
- Control of toxic substance availability
- ‘Toning down’ reports in the press

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WHO – Effective interventions

- Restricting access to means
- Adequate prevention and treatment of alcohol and substance misuse
- School based interventions
 - Crisis management
 - Enhancing self esteem
 - Development of coping skills
 - Healthy decision making

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The challenge of evidence based practice

- Diversity and complexity
- Sample size
- Achieving the gold standard

Leads to more pragmatic evidence based practice

- Psychological autopsy
- Large population studies
- Limited case control

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J. Mann et al – Systematic Review

- 23 experts from 15 countries
- 5020 articles searched
- 93 articles met criteria
- 3 major types of studies
 - Systematic reviews
 - Quantitative studies
 - Population based

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J. Mann et al:

Most promising interventions

- Physician education
- Means restriction
- Gatekeeper education

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J. Mann et al:

Interventions requiring further research

- Screening
- Psychotherapy (combined with pharmacological interventions)
- Chain of Care
- Media

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J. Mann et al:

Overall approach

- Multi model
- Evidence based
- Guided by testable hypotheses
- Sufficient population size
- Outcome measures

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Robert D. Goldney

- Not a systematic review
- Pragmatic review of recent studies using variety of research strategies
- Diverse paths to suicide prevention

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Robert D. Goldney

What works?

- Standard management practice e.g. deliberate self harm
- Helplines and ongoing contact
- Psychotherapeutic approaches
- Reducing media publicity
- Restricting access

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R. Goldney

‘It is probable that a common thread to all these interventions is that they provide a sense of caring for those who are suicidal, even if it is in an anonymous, restriction of means to suicide, which buys time for the suicidal crisis to dissipate’

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Robert Goldney

- Medication approaches
 - Antidepressants
 - Mood stabilisers
 - Anti psychotic medication

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- Population Approaches
 - US Air Force personnel
 - Nurembourg Against Depression
 - Management of depression in the elderly

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What can we learn?

- Initial focus on what works
- Evaluate everything we do
- Be clear about our own research needs
- Communicate with each other about our own work
- Encourage a broad society response

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Suicide Prevention Strategies – J. John Mann et al.

JAMA October 26, 2005 Vol. 294, No. 16

www.jama.com

Suicide Prevention – A Pragmatic Review of

Recent Studies – Robert G. Goldney

Crisis 2005, Vol. 26, No. 3 128-140.