


Substances, Safety, and Suicide

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Disclosure Information

Pediatrics in Maine: Spring 2021 Educational Series
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Disclosure of relevant financial relationships:
I have no financial relationships to disclose

I will not be discussing off-label use of medications or other treatments



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Objectives

- Describe risk and protective factors for youth suicide attempts and death by suicide
- Discuss the intersection between substance use, suicide, and self harm
- Understand the importance of exploring substance use in clinical and cultural context



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Suicide is

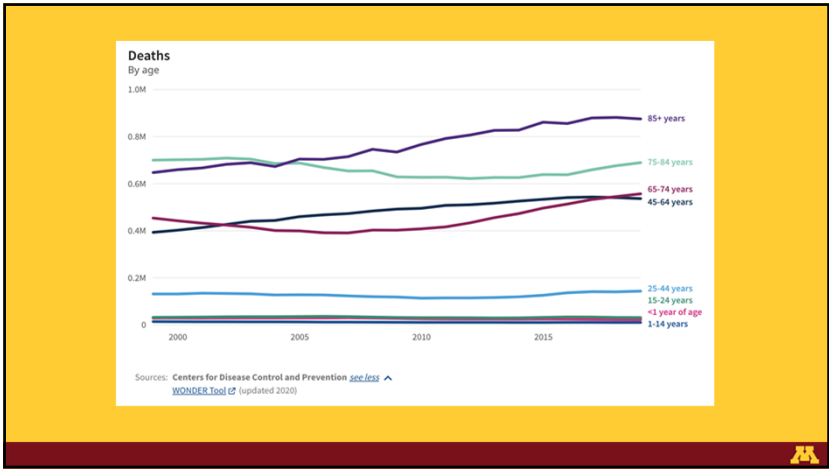
Preventable



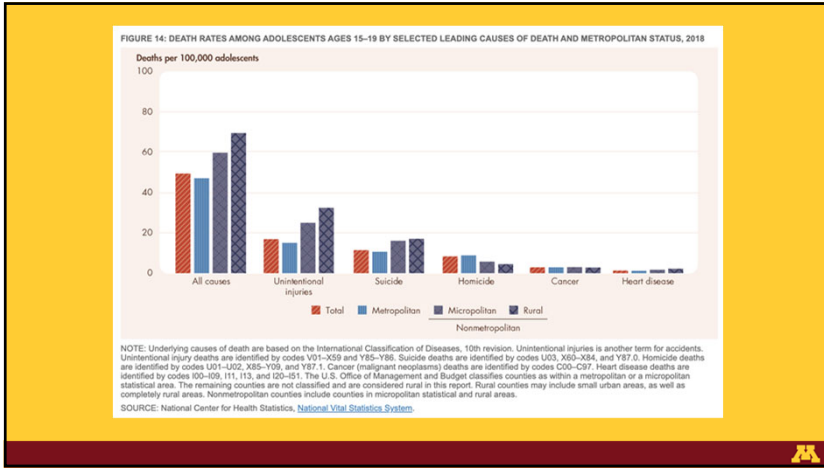
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Suicide Is a low incidence phenomenon

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- ## Youth Suicid-ality: *Some* Risk Factors
- Previous attempt
 - Presence of psychiatric disorders
 - Family history of depression or suicide
 - Loss of a parent to death or divorce
 - Social loss
 - Physical and/or sexual abuse
 - Lack of a support network
 - Bullying
 - Substance use

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Youth Suicid-ality: *Some* Protective Factors

- Good problem-solving abilities
- Strong social connections
- **Restricted access to highly lethal means**
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and that support self-preservation
- Ready access to appropriate clinical intervention
- Effective medical and behavioral health



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Youth Suicide: *Prevention*

Making it more difficult to die in an act of deliberate self-harm.

- building **barriers** on bridges
- **removing guns** from homes with at-risk youth
- **minimum drinking age laws**
- reducing **medication load availability**



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SUICIDE IDEATION (SI) AND ATTEMPTS

• Worse during the pandemic?



- Behavioral/mental health issues
- Youth SI and attempts during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source:
Hill RM, Rufino K, Kurian S, et al. Suicide Ideation and Attempts in a Pediatric Emergency Department Before and During COVID-19. *Pediatrics*. 2021;147(3): e2020029280



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Youth substance use:

COVID-19 impact?



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Youth suicide:

Where Does Substance Use Fit In?



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Youth self-harm: Cannabis

“Association of Cannabis Use With Self-harm and Mortality Risk Among Youths [age 10-24 years] With Mood Disorders”

- Retrospective cohort study
- Medicaid claims and death certificate data
- Depression +/- Cannabis Use Disorder diagnosis
- CUD linked with increased risk for
 - nonfatal self-harm, all-cause mortality - unintentional overdose and homicide, NOT suicide

Fontanella CA et al. JAMA Pediatr. 2021;175(4):377–384.
doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.5494



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Youth self-harm: Opioids

Prescription Opioid Misuse and Risky Adolescent Behavior

- Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey 2017 (Cross-sectional)
- Ever nonmedical opioid use was associated with all measured 22 risk behaviors
- Duh

Bhatia D et al. Pediatrics Feb 2020, 145 (2) e20192470; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2019-2470



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Youth self-harm: Opioids

Current Prescription Opioid Misuse and Suicide Risk Behaviors Among High School Students

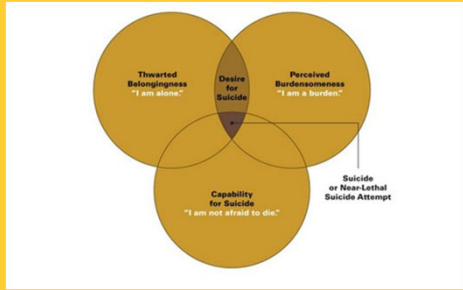
- Data from YRBS 2019 (cross-sectional)
- Both current and past nonmedical opioid use were significantly associated with all suicide risk behaviors compared with no POM.
- Females and those identifying as “LGBTQ+”

Wilkins N et al. (2021). Pediatrics Epub ahead of print. doi:10.1542/peds.2020-030601



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Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide



Adapted from Joiner TE (2005). Why people die by suicide. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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Identity Matters

- Age/Generation
- Disability Status (developmental)
- Disability Status (acquired)
- Religion and Spiritual Orientation
- Ethnicity and Race
- Socioeconomic Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Indigenous Heritage
- National Origin
- Gender

Source: Hays P. Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment, diagnosis, and therapy, third edition. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association; 2016.

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A²DDRESSINGS

Appearance (eg., body shape and size)

Substance Use

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Young People Stories

Patient TP: racism kills

"He allegedly threatened suicide."

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Young People Stories

Patient HB: a death of despair?

“I only feel connected, that warmth, when I'm using.”



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Summary

- DO Ask about suicidal thoughts
- DO Ask about substance use
- DO Consider substance use in cultural, identity, and clinical context
- DO Be prepared to question/re-work case formulation



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Suggested Readings

Joiner TE (2005). Why people die by suicide. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Spechler PA et al. (2015). *Cannabis use in early adolescence: Evidence of amygdala hypersensitivity to signals of threat*. Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, Vol 16: 63-70, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2015.08.007>.

Martinez-Ales G., Hernandez-Calle D., Khauli N., Keyes K.M. (2020) *Why Are Suicide Rates Increasing in the United States? Towards a Multilevel Reimagination of Suicide Prevention*. In: Baca-Garcia E. (eds) Behavioral Neurobiology of Suicide and Self Harm. Current Topics in Behavioral Neurosciences, vol 46. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/7854_2020_158



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