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DETECTING SUICIDE RISK IN ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS IN AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT: A PILOT STUDY

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Suicide is a serious health concern and was the cause of death of 29,350 Americans in 2000, making suicide the 11th leading cause of death for all Americans, and the 3rd leading cause of death for young people from 15-24 years of age (Gould, Greenberg, Velting, & Shaffer, 2003; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). Furthermore, individuals who were over 65 years of age accounted for 18% of all suicide deaths in the United States (National Institute of Mental Health, 2003). The Emergency Department (ED) is an ideal setting in which to detect suicide risk; the most important intervention in the prevention of suicide in or following the ED visit is screening (Gould, et al., 2003). The purpose of this pilot study was to assess the incidence of reported suicide risk in adolescents and adults who presented to an Emergency Department. The convenience sample of 39 adolescents and 65 adults, who presented to the Emergency Department in March 2004, was asked to answer a four-item Risk Suicide Questionnaire ([RSQ] Horowitz, Wang, Gerald, Burr, Smith & Klavon, 2001). The reliability of the RSQ was evaluated using Cronbach s alpha, and criterion-related validity was determined by correlating responses from the RSQ with the post-evaluation diagnosis. The results and implications of this study will be presented.

References

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