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24th European Congress of Psychiatry

Debate: Suicide risk can be predicted

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Debate: Can suicide be prevented?

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Suicidal behaviour is the most common life-threatening psychiatric emergency. Reliable and precise tools to predict suicidal behaviours and to get support in the clinical practice are frequently requested. Several measurement tools for suicide risk assessment, both psychometric and biological have been studied. However, the low precision of the predictions make these tools insufficient from the clinical perspective. To date, the same applies to the search of genetic predictors. The best information is gained in a standard clinical evaluation, which puts focus on the need of acquiring the best possible knowledge and skills by practicing clinicians. The European Psychiatric Association (EPA) issued a guidance paper on suicide treatment and prevention, which was published in the European Psychiatry in 2012 [1]. This guidance paper elucidates the process of systematic evaluation of suicidal risks in the

clinical interview, an overview of the best treatment possibilities and strategies for follow-up. As psychiatric patients constitute the majority of people who commit suicide, the adequate treatment of depression, substance use disorders, schizophrenia and other psychiatric diseases is a must.

We will probably never be able to have perfect measurements to predict if an individual will or will not commit suicide, due to the complexities of human behaviour. However, with a good clinical praxis, suicide is an unnecessary death [2].

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References

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