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ACTIVE SCREENING OF SUICIDE RISK IN AN ADOLESCENT POPULATION

D. Cosman, B. Nemes, D.C. Herta

Clinical Psychology, University of Medicine and Pharmacy 'Iuliu Hatieganu' Cluj-Napoca, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Introduction: Suicide has emerged as one of the most important causes of death in the age group 15-34 and ranks as the second cause of death after traffic accidents and other injuries in the age group 15-19. In Europe, more than 13,000 young men and women aged 15-24 die by suicide each year. Therefore, identifying risk factors for suicidal behavior has become a priority, and suicide prevention in the young population is a major area of interest for public health professionals, stakeholders and researchers.

Aim: To actively screen for a range of unhealthy behaviors used as cut-offs in the Romanian SEYLE (Saving and Empowering Young Lives in Europe) sample, and to assess their significance as risk factors for suicidal behavior.

Method: 1143 9th grade pupils aged between 14 and 16 from 16 high schools in two counties in North-Western Romania were randomized in the SEYLE protocol. They were screened for suicidal ideation and behavior, depression, anxiety and a number of risk-taking behaviors: non-suicidal self injury, unhealthy eating behavior, sensation seeking & delinquent behavior, substance abuse, increased exposure to media, limited social relationships, bullying, and truancy.

Results and conclusions: Suicidal behavior in adolescents is commonly associated with anxiety and a number of risk-taking behaviors, which may be used as warning signs while actively screening for suicide risk in adolescent populations. Although a high number of at-risk pupils were identified at baseline, no completed or attempted suicides were recorded in the assessed sample at 3-months follow-up.