PROGNOSIS

Attendance at accident and emergency for deliberate self harm predicts increased risk of suicide, especially in women


How prevalent is suicide in people who have committed deliberate self harm?

**METHODS**

**Design:** Prospective cohort study.

**Setting:** Four accident and emergency departments in Manchester, UK; 1997 to 2001.

**Population:** 7968 people (median age of 30 years) attending accident and emergency because of deliberate self harm between September 1997 and August 2001.

**Prognostic factors:** Attendance at accident and emergency for deliberate self harm.

**Outcome:** Suicide rates. Deaths by suicide were identified using the National Confidential Inquiry Into Suicide and Homicide by People With Mental Illness database of the Office of National Statistics. Confirmed suicides and deaths from unknown cause (ICD-9 codes) were considered suicides. Suicide rates in the study population were compared with those for general population of Manchester to give standardised mortality ratios (SMRs).

**Follow up period:** Four years.

**MAIN RESULTS**

Between September 1997 and August 2001, the suicide rate was 371 per 100 000 in people who had attended accident and emergency because of deliberate self harm. Suicide rates were greatest within the first six months of the self harm episode (561.6 per 100 000). Overall, the risk of suicide was 15 times higher in people who had self harmed than for the general population of the region (SMR 15.4, 95% CI 11.8 to 19.9). The risk of suicide in women who had self harmed was 23 times higher than for women in the general population of the region (SMR 23.2, 95% CI 14.5 to 35.1). The risk of suicide in men who had self harmed was 13 times higher than for men in the general population of the region (SMR 12.9, 95% CI 9.2 to 17.8).

**CONCLUSIONS**

People attending accident and emergency because of deliberate self harm have a high risk of suicide. Suicide rates are highest within the first six months of the self harm episode, and the risk of suicide relative to the general population is greater in women who present with self harm than in men.

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