

Suicide Prevention in Older People

Suicide in older people is a complex problem; despite the commonly held view it is very rare for a single event to cause an older person to take their own life. The major challenge for us all is to find effective means of preventing suicide from occurring in the first place. Suicide prevention in older people is not a 'quick fix' problem it requires action at primary, secondary and tertiary levels:

Primary Prevention

At this level the evidence suggests that we need to:

- Improve the economic prosperity of older people
- Increase personal health promotion initiatives to older people
- Promote retirement planning in the workplace
- Build networks of support around the older person
- Promote community engagement and social participation
- Continue to reduce access to the means of suicide

Secondary Prevention

- At this level we need to make significant improvements in:
- Identifying suicidal ideation in older people
- Improve access to mental health services
- Identify and treat depression in older people
- Education programmes for professionals, patients and carers
- Treat underlying physical illness and pain

Tertiary Prevention

- Improved crisis intervention, management and aftercare
- Individual and group therapies including self help groups
- Re-socialisation programmes

