

Substance use disorders and risk of suicide death

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Public Mental Health Professionals

ABSTRACT:

Background: Previous studies indicate that many people who die from suicide have used drugs or alcohol prior to suicide. This study investigated the risk of suicide among patients with substance abuse disorders (SUD) in a US general population to assess suicide risk independent of a mental health diagnoses and to understand gender specific risks.

Methods: We conducted a case-control study using data from 8 healthcare systems, serving >5 million individuals per year in geographically diverse US states. Participants included 2,674 individuals who died by suicide between 1/1/2000 and 12/31/13 and 267,400 matched controls. We examined presence of SUD diagnoses during the year before suicide. We estimated adjusted odds ratios (aOR) of suicide death, adjusting for age, gender, site and psychiatric diagnosis. We also conducted analyses by gender.

Results: All SUD were associated with increased risk of suicide ($p < 0.001$). Multiple diagnoses of SUD were associated with greatest risk (aOR: 9.47, $p < 0.001$). Women with SUD had consistently higher aOR compared to men; with aOR of up to 15.77 ($p < 0.001$) for women with diagnoses of multiple SUD, compared to 7.95 ($p < 0.001$) for men.

Conclusions: Targeted suicide prevention could focus on patients with SUD and may be particularly important for women with SUD.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- To understand the risk of suicide death related to substance abuse disorders.
- To understand differential risk by gender.

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