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SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF PREVENTING SUICIDE IN OLD AGE: 2005-2010

C.A. de Mendonça Lima, R.M. Rodrigues

Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, Centro Hospitalar do Alto Ave, E.P.E., Guimarães, Portugal

Suicide is a typical phenomenon of the elderly and mainly among men. Besides the importance of suicide in terms of public health there is fewer interest to prevent suicide in old age. This can be explained by stigma, poor evaluation of the dimension of the problem and lack of politic will.

Suicide prevention and the care of survivors of suicide depend on the mental health network of care. Interventions to reduce suicide can be made at individual level and at level of the development of policies and strategies. The detection of the persons at risk of suicide and the management of the suicide attempt are two main strategies to prevent suicide. Both received recently an important support from WHO with its publication mhGAP Intervention Guide which was conceived to be used in non-specialized health-care settings by health-care providers working at first- and second-level facilities. It includes guidance on evidence-based interventions to make the diagnosis and manage a number of priority conditions, including suicide.

Our review of the literature pointed to the necessity to develop additional research to determine:

- the role of somatic disorders as precipitant factor;
- the role on suicide of the pre-morbid personality, cognitive functioning, social support and recent and chronic stressing events;
- the participation of normal and pathological ageing on the expression of the suicide behavior;
- the biological markers of suicide in old age;
- the potential impact on suicide rates of educational interventions for the general public and for caregivers.