

Contact with different mental health services in the year before suicide; a nationwide registry-based study.

Walby, F. A.¹, Kildahl, A. T.¹, Myhre M. Ø.¹

¹National Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

Introduction/Aim: Contact with mental health services is common before suicide, although large variation between nations and health care systems do exist. Most previous studies have focused on adult psychiatric inpatients or discharged patients. The current study from a high-income country with a comprehensive public health care system includes all age groups and the following specialist services; in- and outpatient mental health services, addiction services, child and adolescent mental health services as well as independent practitioners.

Materials and Methods: Data was obtained from the historical cohort of the Norwegian Surveillance System for Suicide, which consists of a registry linkage between the Cause of Death Registry (CDR) and the Norwegian Patient Registry (NPR) between 2008 and 2015.

Results: Of 4455 suicides in the population of Norway between 2008 and 2015, 1910 (43%) decedents had been in contact with one or more services in the last year before death. The male/female ratio was 1.6 and similar across age groups. Contact rates were lower in those under 24 and in people above 75 years. 1671 (87.4%) had been in contact with adult mental health services, 353 (18.5%) with addiction services, 199 (10.4%) with independent practitioners and only 45 (2.4%) with child and adolescent mental health services. 336 (17.6 %) cases had contact with more than one type of specialist service within the last year - most often mental health and addiction services.

Discussion: We found much higher rates of contact with mental health services in total than any previous studies. Both the nature of the Norwegian health care organization and our inclusion of every relevant mental health service might explain the findings.

Conclusions: That nearly half of all population suicides had been in contact with mental health services in the year before suicide raises important questions for prevention.