

End of Life and Suicide

"LIFE IS PLEASANT.
DEATH IS PEACEFUL.
IT'S THE TRANSITION
THAT'S TROUBLESOME."

- Isaac Asimov

Professor Chris Willcox
APS End-of-Life Roundtable
13 October 2017

www.AgingCare.com

The personal

- So is the transition troublesome?
 - For some yes
 - For some no
- Death of my parents/parents-in-law
 - 1 accidental and immediate
 - 3 painful
 - 1 peaceful but process very difficult
 - “I want to be dead”

NSW Suicides

- In NSW 65-70 per month
- Contact with mental Health services 15-20 per month
 - At least one each month, older age with significant physical health problems
 - Under report – database search by palliative care, end of life and cancer (free text field).
 - One quarter no previous contact

Suicide & physical health concerns

Diagnosis	ICD10 code	Multiple entry	
		First	Second
A. Males			
Mental and behavioural disorders		1674	362
Organic	F00–F09	16	1
Use of alcohol	F10	552	23
Use of drugs	F11–F19	253	92
Schizophrenia	F20–F29	155	29
Mood disorder/depression	F30–F39	628	180
Other mental health	F40–F99	70	37
Physical diseases		947	514
HIV	B20–B24	24	6
Other infectious and parasitic dis.	A + B resid	15	0
Cancer	C00–C99	189	31
Dis. of nervous system	G00–G99	129	44
Dis. of circulatory system	I00–I99	327	199
Dis of respiratory system	J00–J99	86	93
Dis of digestive system	K00–K99	19	34
Other diseases	D,E,H,L–R	158	107
Total diseases		2621	876
Consequences of external causes	S00–T99	7287	2743
Other methods of suicide	X60–X84	0	4
Other external causes	X residua	1	7
No entry (blank)		181	
Total suicides		10,090	

ABS data 1997-2001

B. Females			
Mental and behavioural disorders		602	125
Organic	F00-F09	9	1
Use of alcohol	F10	66	4
Use of drugs	F11-F19	90	24
Schizophrenia	F20-F29	62	8
Mood disorder/depression	F30-F39	322	78
Other mental health	F40-F99	53	10
Physical diseases		258	177
HIV	B20-B24	0	0
Other infectious and parasitic dis.	A + B resid	8	0
Cancer	C00-C99	42	8
Dis. of nervous system	G00-G99	44	21
Dis. of circulatory system	I00-I99	69	60
Dis of respiratory system	J00-J99	41	28
Dis of digestive system	K00-K99	11	18
Other diseases	D,E,H,L-R	43	42
Total diseases		860	302
Consequences of external causes	S00-T99	1701	910
Other methods of suicide	X60-X84	0	2
Other external causes	X residua	1	0
No entry (blank)		60	
Total suicides		2622	

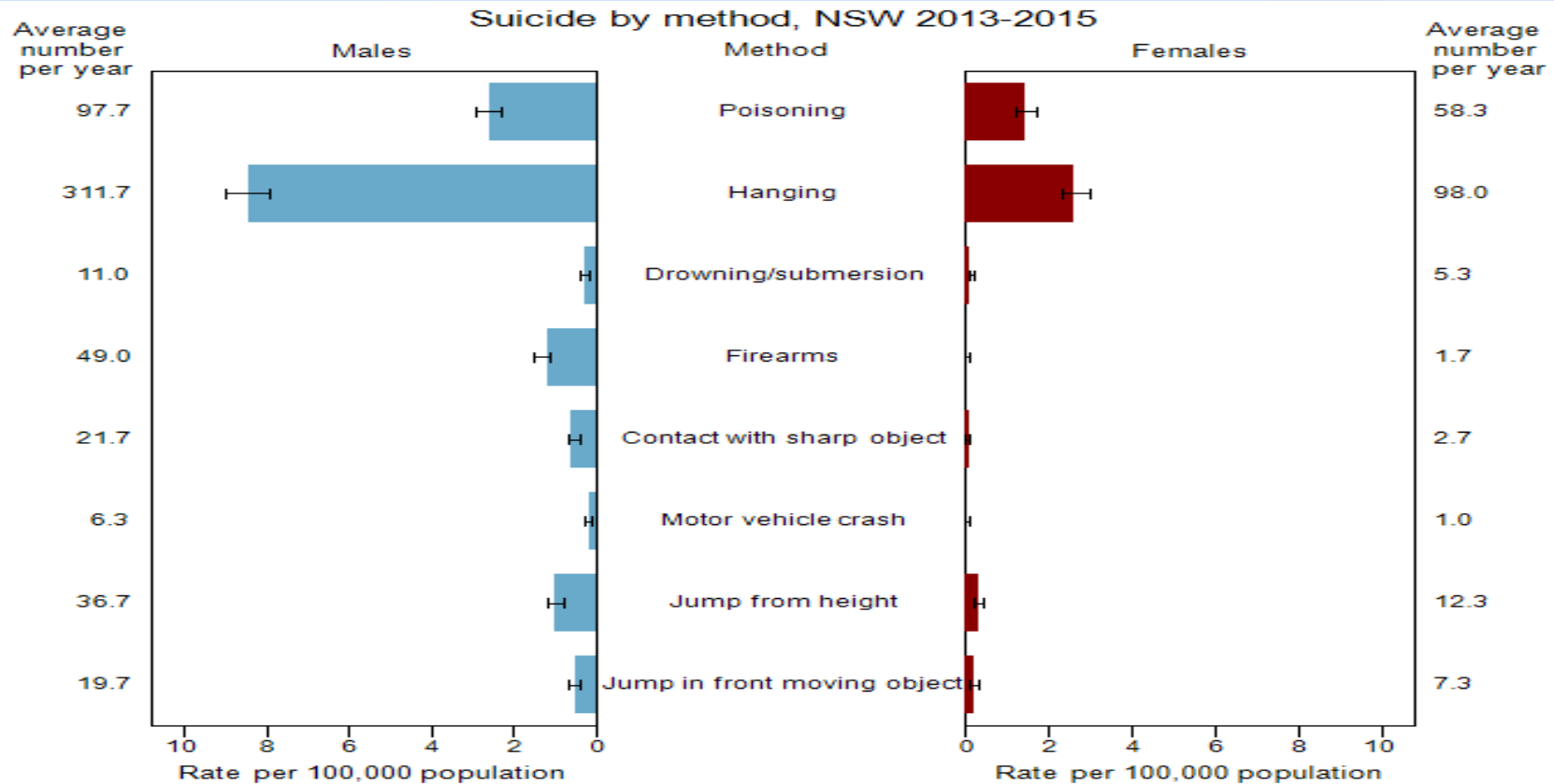
Medical disorders of suicides in Australia (Ruzicka, Choib & Sadkowsky 2005)

Suicide & pain

Analysis	Number of studies	Meta-analysis	
		ES type	Point
Death Wish	3	<i>Prevalence</i>	29.8%
	3	<i>OR</i>	1.72
Suicidal Ideation current	12	<i>Prevalence</i>	12.4%
	12	<i>OR</i>	2.09
Suicidal Ideation lifetime	6	<i>Prevalence</i>	22.9%
	6	<i>OR</i>	1.76
Suicidal plan current	6	<i>Prevalence</i>	2.0%
	6	<i>OR</i>	2.60
Suicidal plan lifetime	2	<i>Prevalence</i>	8.5%
	2	<i>OR</i>	2.16
Suicide attempts current	9	<i>Prevalence</i>	4.7%
	9	<i>OR</i>	2.37
Suicide attempts lifetime	11	<i>Prevalence</i>	14.9%
	11	<i>OR</i>	2.16
Suicide death (any pain severity)	8	<i>Prevalence</i>	2.27%
	8	<i>OR</i>	1.37
Suicide death (moderate pain and more severe)	3	<i>Prevalence</i>	2.04%
	3	<i>OR</i>	1.59
Suicidal death (severe and very severe pain)	2	<i>Prevalence</i>	8.0%
	2	<i>OR</i>	2.80

Stubbs 2016, Journal of Psychiatric Research

Suicide methods



Suicide Prevention Australia 2012

POSITION STATEMENT

Chronic Illness, Chronic Pain and Suicide

- “Guiding principles
 - Physical ill-health and mental ill-health are inter-related, which has implications for suicide risk.
 - This inter-relationship is little understood although functional impairments and quality of life are known to be greater influencing factors than the type of illness or its prognosis.

Suicide Prevention Australia

- Guiding principles (continued)
 - People living with chronic physical conditions, their carers, and their health professionals know best how to manage their care. They are generally resourced and capable to achieve maximum quality of life outcomes, however there is potential for much greater mental health and suicide prevention integration within the physical health care process.”

Suicide Prevention Australia

- “21% of people who died by suicide experienced physical health problems which may have contributed to the death (Commonwealth of Australia 2006).”
- UK report “conservatively estimated that 10% of people who suicide have chronic illness as an influencing factor (Bazalgette et al. 2011).”

Psychologists

- We reflect society
 - “It’s the right of each individual
 - “Our job is to minimise risk (of death of injury)
- A middle road?
 - Self determination (under what circumstances)?
 - Capacity – what does this truly mean?
 - “Free” informed consent

The end - not literally

80%

of people say that, if seriously ill, they would want to talk to their doctor about end-of-life care.

7%

of people report actually having had an end-of-life conversation with their doctor.

ONLY 25%

of doctors knew that their patients had advance directives on file.



And their psychologist?