Suicide Risk Assessment and Response in Primary Care

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~50% of suicide decedents visit primary care during the months immediately preceding their deaths

Stone et al. 2018; Luoma et al. 2002; Trofimovich et al. 2012

Over 50% of suicide decedents deny suicide ideation or do not mention suicidal thoughts in the time leading up to their deaths

Bryan et al., 2016; Busch et al., 2003; Coombs et al., 1992; Hull et al., 1999; Kovacs et al., 1976
PHQ-2
↓
PHQ-9
Depression screening
Depression assessment
Suicide risk screening

Due to low incidence of suicidal behaviors among primary care patients, suicide risk screening in primary care leads to very high false positives.

For each true positive on the PHQ-9, there are approximately 200 false positives.

Louzon et al. 2014; Simon et al. 2013

PRImary care Screening Methods (PRISM) Study

Kleiman et al. 2017
Multisite, prospective cohort study of 2744 primary care patients

All participants completed survey battery including PHQ-9 and SCS-R

Bryan et al. 2019

13 (0.5%) patients had suicidal behavior within 30 days

28 (1.0%) patients had suicidal behavior within 90 days

Bryan et al. 2021

The world would be better off without me.
I can’t stand this pain anymore.
I’ve never been successful at anything.
I can’t tolerate being this upset any longer.
I can never be forgiven for the mistakes I have made.
No one can help solve my problems.
It is unbearable when I get this upset.
I am completely unworthy of love.
Nothing can help solve my problems.
It is impossible to describe how badly I feel.
I can’t cope with my problems any longer.
I can’t imagine anyone being able to withstand this kind of pain.
There is nothing redeeming about me.
I don’t deserve to live another moment.
I would rather die now than feel this unbearable pain.
No one is as loathsome as me.

Bryan et al. 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHQ-9 Item 9 Response</th>
<th>1 Month (n=13)</th>
<th>3 Months (n=28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>5 (38.5)</td>
<td>11 (39.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several Days</td>
<td>4 (30.1)</td>
<td>8 (28.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than half the days</td>
<td>1 (7.7)</td>
<td>3 (10.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearly every day</td>
<td>3 (23.1)</td>
<td>5 (17.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (3.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The world would be better off without me. 0.730 (0.749, 0.964)
I can’t stand this pain anymore. 0.674 (0.720, 0.932)
I’ve never been successful at anything 0.604 (0.636, 0.947)
I can’t tolerate being up set any longer. 0.741 (0.727, 0.952)
can never be forgotten for the mistakes I have made. 0.644 (0.738, 0.975)
no one can help solve my problems. 0.531 (0.713, 0.940)
It’s unbearable when I get this upset. 0.760 (0.739, 0.956)
can completely untruthful or love. 0.740 (0.754, 0.986)
nothing can help solve my problems. 0.667 (0.735, 0.948)
I can’t tolerate being up set any longer. 0.655 (0.721, 0.947)
can’t cope with my problems anymore. 0.792 (0.645, 0.970)
can’t imagine anyone being able to withstand this kind of pain. 0.773 (0.744, 0.954)
there is nothing redeeming about me. 0.767 (0.730, 0.956)
can’t tolerate to live another moment. 0.791 (0.750, 0.986)
could rather die now than feel this unbearable pain. 0.796 (0.715, 0.977)
No one is as loathsome as me. 0.748 (0.745, 0.977)

Screening Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TP</th>
<th>FP</th>
<th>TN</th>
<th>FN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>30 days postbaseline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>2104</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2482</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 7 positive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2482</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 18 positive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2482</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 14 positive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>2504</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>90 days postbaseline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>2098</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>2395</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 7 positive</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>2395</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 12 positive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>2471</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 14 positive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>2494</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Screening Results

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>30 days postbaseline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>0.692</td>
<td>0.818</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>0.934</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 7 positive</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 12 positive</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 14 positive</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>0.968</td>
<td>0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>90 days postbaseline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>0.615</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>0.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 7 positive</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td>0.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 12 positive</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>0.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHQ-2 positive + PHQ-9 positive + SCS item 14 positive</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.370</td>
<td>0.975</td>
<td>0.187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thoughts about death or suicide ebb and flow, sometimes very quickly.

Assessing suicide-specific negative thoughts in addition to suicidal ideation can improve the identification of suicidal patients.

One or more items from the Suicide Cognitions Scale-Revised (SCS-R) can reduce false positives among primary care patients.

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**What a Crisis Response Plan Is**

- A memory aid to facilitate early identification of emotional crises
- A checklist of personalized strategies to follow during emotional crises
- A problem solving tool
- A collaboratively-developed strategy for managing acute periods of risk
What a Crisis Response Plan Is Not

- a no-suicide contract
- a no-harm contract
- a contract for safety

Essential Ingredients of Effective Interventions

1. Based on a simple, empirically-supported model
2. High fidelity by the clinician
3. Adherence by the patient
4. Emphasis on skills training
5. Prioritization of self-management
6. Easy access to crisis services

Rudd et al. (2009)

Understanding Suicidal Behaviors

Functional Model of Suicide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reinforcement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatic (Internal)</td>
<td>Adding something desirable (&quot;To feel something, even if it is pain&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (External)</td>
<td>Gaining something from others (&quot;To get attention or let others know how I feel&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ryan, Rudd, & Wertenberger, 2012; Nock & Prinstein, 2004)
Stable and Dynamic Aspects of Suicide Risk

Crisis Response Planning: Mechanics

Narrative Assessment
Ask patient to describe the chronology of events for the suicidal episode that led up to the crisis
- “Let’s talk about your suicide attempt/what’s been going on lately.”
- “Can you tell me the story of what happened?”
Assess events, thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors
- “What happened next?”
- “And then what happened?”
- “What were you saying to yourself at that point?”
- “Did you notice any sensations in your body at that point?”
Remain focused on the index suicidal episode

Crisis Response Plan
1. Explain rationale for CRP
2. Provide card for patient to record CRP
3. Identify personal warning signs
4. Identify self-management strategies
5. Identify reasons for living
6. Identify social supports
7. Provide crisis / emergency steps
8. Verbally review and rate likelihood of use
Sample Crisis Response Plans

CRP Research

• Reduces suicide attempts by 76% as compared to treatment as usual (Bryan et al., 2017a)

• Significantly increases positive emotions and optimism when reasons for living are included (Bryan et al., 2017b; Rozek et al., 2018)

• Increases recall of self-management, reasons for living, and social support; recall of these elements associated with significantly reduced risk (Bryan et al., 2018)

• More frequent use of CRP with reasons for living associated with greater reductions in risk (Bryan et al., 2018)

Tips for Effective Crisis Response Planning

• Ask patients to generate ideas by asking what has worked in the past

• Use index cards or business cards, not sheets of paper

• Handwrite the plan, do not “fill in the blanks” with pre-printed paper

• Take a picture of the card to keep in their smart phone

Thank you!

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