

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE IN PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION

Principal investigator:

Professor Keith Hawton, Centre for Suicide Research, Department of Psychiatry, University of Oxford.

Co-investigators:

Dr Camilla Haw, Consultant Psychiatrist, St Andrews Hospital, Northampton.

Dr Kate Saunders, OHSRC Junior Fellow, University Department of Psychiatry, Oxford.

LAY SUMMARY

The aims of the proposed research will be:

- (i) To conduct a systematic review of the international research literature on factors associated with risk of suicide in people with depression;
- (ii) To produce a guide for clinicians (especially general practitioners) that will assist them in assessing suicide risk in patients with depression.

The methods used will include;

- (i) Searching relevant electronic databases for research reports using the methodology previously employed at the Centre for Suicide Research for similar reviews. Screening of reports for suitability will be done independently by two researchers. The main focus will be on longitudinal and case control studies. Data on potential risk factors will be extracted and entered into an electronic database for subsequent analyses.
- (ii) Review of list of papers by international expert group to identify any missing reports.

Risk factors from the following domains will be included: Psychiatric disorders – severity, symptoms, number of episodes, co-morbidity with other disorders, alcohol and substance misuse; Family history of psychiatric disorder and suicidal behaviour; Previous suicidal behaviour (including self-harm); Psychological symptoms (e.g. hopelessness, self-esteem, aggression, irritability); Physical disorders – including current and previous disorders (these will be sub-grouped by specific types of disorders); Previous and current psychiatric and psychological treatment; Help-seeking and compliance with care.

The review will not include studies of genetic and other biological mechanisms, although papers on these topics identified through the search will be collected for possible future reviews.

The data on individual risk factors will be subject to meta-analysis. Statistical advice will be provided by members of the Centre for Statistics in Medicine at Oxford University (which already collaborates with our Centre). It is recognised that some risk factors may be relatively rare, yet of importance to clinicians. Tinnitus would be a case in point. Where reports on such factors are identified but data are insufficient for any sort of meta-analysis these findings will be collated and reported descriptively.