

[Hong Kong]

Role of Physicians in Suicide Prevention in Hong Kong

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In Hong Kong, suicidal prevention is mainly dealt with through the Hospital Authority. Its Coordinating Committee for Psychiatry regularly monitors the suicide statistics and plans for new service. Elderly suicide is particularly monitored through the establishment of Elderly Suicide Prevention Teams in each hospital cluster in Hong Kong. Academic research and support on this area is done through the University of Hong Kong's Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP) at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Hong Kong (<http://csrp.hku.hk/WEB/eng/index.asp>).

The Hospital Authority keeps reliable suicide statistics of all cases treated through the public hospital system. The number of calls received by the Suicide Prevention Service in 2007–8 was 24,154 (http://www.sps.org.hk/index_en.php?cid=2). The number of calls received by the Samaritans in 2007–8 and 2008–9 was 28,896 (79 calls per day) and 31,030 (85 calls per day) respectively (<http://www.samaritans.org.hk/index.php?page=303>). The figure from the Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong is 1,015 in 2009. More researches on elderly suicides could be found at the East Asian Archives of Psychiatry at http://www.hkjpsych.com/journal_file/1101V21N1_p17.pdf.

The Samaritans is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that offers a hotline for people to prevent suicide (<http://www.samaritans.org.hk>). The Suicidal Prevention Service is another NGO offering such services (http://www.sps.org.hk/index_en.php). The Samaritans Befrienders

Hong Kong also answers calls 24 hours a day. Other NGOs that offer hotlines to prevent suicide include: 明愛向晴軒 Harmony House/和諧之家; 基督教家庭服務中心恬寧居—婦女庇護中心; Guardianship Board/監護委員會; and 虐老防治資訊網. The Hospital Authority also runs a hotline for elderly suicide and delivers prompt service through related fast track clinics in their psychogeriatrics outpatient clinics.

Psychiatrists in the Hospital Authority do the bulk of such work. Primary care doctors trained in psychiatry are taught to pick out depressed patients and look for symptoms and signs of suicide and start appropriate treatment for depression. If we believe that depression is one of the main causes of suicide, early treatment of depression will help to reduce the incidence. Similarly, if we can deal with or refer our patients with social or financial problems to the appropriate resource for management, e.g., Social Service Department, some of the suicides can be prevented. Early detection is essential to suicide prevention and the point of first contact is always the family doctor. The primary care doctors in Hong Kong are trained to manage mood disorders by the Family Medicine Unit which runs the diploma in Community Psychological Medicine of the University of Hong Kong annually and the Centre of Mood Disorders of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Despite the wide range of services available, Hong Kong still has high incidence of elderly suicide.

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This article is based on a presentation made at the Symposium "The Role of Physicians in Suicide Prevention" held at the 27th CMAAO General Assembly, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C., on November 12, 2011.

Role of Physicians in Suicide Prevention

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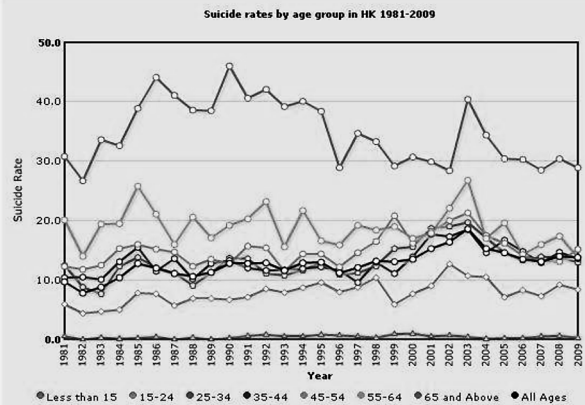
Centres / Organizations of Suicide Prevention

- ❖ Hospital Authority's Coordinating Committee for Psychiatry
- ❖ Elderly Suicide Prevention Teams in each hospital cluster
- ❖ University of Hong Kong's Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSR&P)
- ❖ Suicide Prevention Service
- ❖ The Samaritans
- ❖ The Samaritans Befrienders Hong Kong
- ❖ The HK Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention
- ❖ Others: 明愛向晴軒; Harmony House / 和諧之家; 基督教家庭服務中心恬寧居 - 婦女庇護中心; Guardianship Board / 監護委員會; and 虐老防治資訊網

Statistics on Suicide

- ❖ The number of calls received by:
 - the Suicide Prevention Service in 2007-8 was 24,154 (http://www.sps.org.hk/index_en.php?cid=2)
 - the Samaritans in 2007-8 and 2008-9 was 28,896 (79 calls per day) and 31,030 (85 calls per day) respectively (<http://www.samaritans.org.hk/index.php?page=303>)
 - the Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong in 2009 is 1,015

II) Suicide Rates and Deaths by Age Group



Source: HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, HKU

Hotlines / Facilities to Prevent Suicide

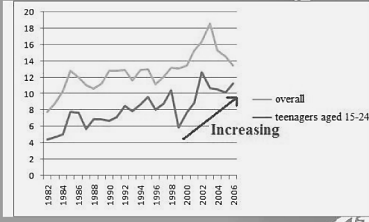
- ❖ Provided by
 - The Samaritans - a non-governmental organization (NGO) (<http://www.samaritans.org.hk>)
 - Suicide Prevention Services (an NGO) - 24-hour service (http://www.sps.org.hk/index_en.php)
 - The Samaritans Befrienders Hong Kong answers calls 24 hours a day
 - The Hospital Authority runs a hotline for elderly suicide
 - Other NGOs: 明愛向晴軒; Harmony House / 和諧之家; 基督教家庭服務中心恬寧居 - 婦女庇護中心; Guardianship Board / 監護委員會; and 虐老防治資訊網

Physicians' role in Suicide Prevention

- Psychiatrists in the Hospital Authority do the bulk of such work.
- Primary care doctors trained in psychiatry are taught to pick out depressed patients and look for symptoms and signs of suicide and start appropriate treatment for depression, referral to appropriate resource for management, e.g., Social Service Department.
- Early detection is essential to suicide prevention and the point of first contact is always the family doctor.
- The primary care doctors in Hong Kong are trained to manage mood disorders by the Family Medicine Unit which runs the diploma in Community Psychological Medicine of the University of Hong Kong annually and the Centre of Mood Disorders of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Other Specific Issues

- ❖ high incidence of elderly suicide
- ❖ suicide being the major cause of teenage death and suicide rate among teenagers aged 15-24 has been escalating since 1999
(<http://csrp.hku.hk/web/eng/pageHandler.asp?id=502> and http://www2.caes.hku.hk/improvehk/files/2010/08/IHK_Vol_6_13-15.pdf)



Thank You!!