



Elder Suicide: A Clinical Perspective

Nancy Edgar, L.C.S.W.

Isolation

- Isolation is a key factor in suicide among older adults.
- Isolation is treatable; there are services to decrease isolation.
- The hallmark of a civilized society is the value it places on its most vulnerable populations, such as older adults. Value translates to services.

*Elder Orphans**

- 60% of persons residing in nursing homes **never** have a visitor.

*From *Comprehensive Assessment of Older Minds: Beyond the Usual Scales and Tests*, Presentation by William Matteson, Ph.D.
<http://www.health-ed.com/seminarDetails.php?semID=104621>

Mary

- Age 89
- Isolated
- Multiple Losses
- Poor Health
- Means for Suicide Readily Available

Reasons for Masking Suicide

- Stigma and Shame
- Financial Consequences
- Desire to Protect Loved Ones
- Avoidance of Legal Issues

Undetermined Intent

- If half of **undetermined intent** poisonings were self-inflicted, *suicide attempts* in the U.S. would be 9% higher.
- If half of **undetermined intent** poisonings were self-inflicted, *suicides* in the U.S. would be 5% higher.

Source: Suicide Prevention Resource Center, *United States Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet*, www.sprc.org

SENIORS CARING FOR SENIORS

- A phenomenon of our time is YOUNGER SENIORS taking care of OLDER SENIORS.
 - The 72-year-old son may not understand the level of care needed by his 95-year-old parent (especially when they are geographically separated).
 - There is a need for professional staff such as social workers to identify needs and then work with families to help them make informed choices.

Sam

- Age 89
- Affluent
- White Male
- Multiple Losses
- Poor Health
- Means for Suicide Readily Available

What is Senior Peer Counseling?

- Senior Peer Counselors are compassionate men and women over the age of 55 who are recruited from our community to work as volunteers with isolated seniors.
- Senior Peer Counselors are trained and supervised by mental health professionals to provide nonjudgmental emotional support.

Senior Peer Counselor Volunteers of Yolo County



Q & A/Discussion

- What will be the impact of budget cuts on older adult services?
- What is the future of prevention in the current economic climate?