



Press Release: Launch of E-Learning Programme on Establishing a Surveillance System for Suicide Attempts and Self-Harm

The WHO Collaborating Centre for Surveillance and Research in Suicide Prevention at the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) Cork, Ireland, is launching an E-Learning Programme on Establishing a Surveillance System for Suicide Attempts and Self-Harm. The main objective of a suicide attempt/self-harm surveillance system is to assess the extent of the problem of hospital presentations due to suicide attempts and self-harm in order to inform prevention, intervention and treatment.

This E-Learning Programme, produced in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse of the World Health Organization (WHO), is based on the WHO Practice Manual for Establishing and Maintaining Surveillance Systems for Suicide Attempts and Self-Harm (WHO, 2016) and is comprised of six modules, including an extensive training in case ascertainment for staff involved in self-harm suicide attempt surveillance.

The E-Learning Programme is a tool for countries to use in setting up a public health surveillance system for suicide attempts and self-harm cases presenting to general hospitals. This programme facilitates training and capacity building in places where face-to-face training can be challenging.

Improved surveillance and monitoring of suicide attempts and self-harm is a core element of suicide prevention and is needed for all countries. Each year, close to 800,000 people die due to suicide, and for each suicide, there are likely to have been more than 20 suicide attempts. Having engaged in one or more acts of attempted suicide or self-harm is the single most important predictor of death by suicide. Consequently, long-term monitoring of the incidence, demographic patterns and methods involved in cases of attempted suicide and self-harm presenting at hospitals in a country or region provides important information that can assist in the development of suicide prevention strategies.

The WHO's report "Preventing suicide: a global imperative" published in 2014, identified a need for many countries to have guidance on the surveillance of suicide attempts presenting to general hospitals. Currently, the number of countries that have established a surveillance system for suicide attempts is limited, and comparison between established systems is often hindered by differences between systems.

Dr Alexandra Fleischmann (WHO) states that *"A major advantage of this programme is that because it can be accessed globally, it will contribute to closing the gap in knowledge about suicide attempts and self-harm and associated risk factors"*.

According to Professor Ella Arensman (UCC, NSRF) *"This programme will guide policy makers and professionals working in suicide prevention to establish suicide attempt/self-harm surveillance systems at global level, thereby improving insight into trends, high risk groups and health service response to people who engage in this behaviour"*.

The E-Learning Programme was prepared by Prof Ella Arensman, Fenella Ryan and Leon Fan, in collaboration with Dr Alexandra Fleischmann (WHO).

Notes to the Editor

- The E-Learning Programme can be accessed here:
<https://suicideresearchpreventionlearning.com/?sfwd-courses=establishing-and-maintaining-surveillance-systems-for-suicide-attempts-and-self-harm>
- For further press queries please contact: Mr Niall McTernan, National Suicide Research Foundation.
E: niall.mcternan@ucc.ie; T: 021 420 5551
- Suicide reporting guidelines can be found here: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-work-ireland/media-guidelines-ireland>
- Journalists reporting on suicide are advised to include information on relevant help lines and websites:
Samaritans: 116 123; Childline: 1800 66 66 66; www.aware.ie; www.yourmentalhealth.ie; ie.reachout.com

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