

Updated Review of Youth Suicide Risk Assessments, 2016 – 2021

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Introduction

Suicide remains a leading cause of death in youth, but many decedents were seen by healthcare workers in the month or year prior to their death. These healthcare visits provide an opportunity for universal screening, but there is limited data on the validity of suicide risk assessments in this population. A recent scoping review identified 22 suicide risk assessments validated to various degrees. This review builds on the knowledge from the scoping review by examining data from 2016 to present.

Methods

A search was conducted in PubMed beginning with the suicide risk assessments identified in the previously published review. Newly identified assessments were included in the search. Articles were screened by title and abstract by inclusion and exclusion criteria (validity testing in youth, English language, peer-reviewed).

Results

Of 112 articles identified, 12 met inclusion/exclusion criteria. Interrupted and aborted suicide attempts recorded by the C-SSRS were shown to predict future suicide attempts independent of suicidal ideation and depression. The Ask Suicide Screening Questions (ASQ) demonstrated high sensitivity, specificity, and negative predictive value in medical/surgical inpatients and in primary care and specialty outpatient clinics. A new type of screen was also identified- the Computerized Adaptive Screen for Suicidal Youth (CASSY).

Discussion

New data on the ASQ shows that it is valid and reliable in inpatient and outpatient settings- it was the only assessment studied in all 3 settings between 2016 - present. Approaches for validation were not uniform so direct head-to-head comparisons are difficult. More research is needed on existing and newly identified assessments to identify youth at risk for suicide.