Suicide among Older Chinese Adults in the United States

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A study of Chinese people over the age of 60 in the greater Chicago area revealed that living alone, poor health, and an annual income under $5,000 were significantly associated with the lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts. The authors suggest that “older adults with a lower income level may experience greater life stress that may lead to suicide attempts” and are more likely to be uninsured and thus may be reluctant to seek professional help. The analysis also found that living in small households (i.e. of 1-2 members) increases suicide risk, which the authors suggest is associated with a lack of family support which violates the traditional Chinese cultural value that adult children should care for elderly parents.

The most common means were overdoses involving medication. Living in households of 1-2 members (vs. 3-4 or 5 or more members) was associated with lifetime attempts, but not with attempts during the previous 12 months. Forty percent of those who had made at least one attempt in their lifetime lived alone, compared with 21.2 percent of those who had never attempted. Compared to those who had not made an attempt within the past 12 months, the portion of the sample that had made an attempt in the past 12 months included a significantly higher proportion of people with an annual income of less than $5,000 a year (88.9 percent vs. 33.1 percent) and reported poor health (44.4 percent vs. 18.8 percent).
