Increasing knowledge about suicide and reducing negative attitudes about people who die by suicide may improve help-seeking, according to the results of a study of adults in Australia. The authors suggested that public education campaigns on these issues should target younger people and men as they have a more negative attitude toward help-seeking than do older people and women (respectively). The research also revealed that people with suicidal ideation or depression have more negative attitudes toward help-seeking and lower intentions of seeking help than other people.

The authors reported that higher levels of “suicide literacy” were associated with positive attitudes toward seeking help. Suicide literacy includes understanding the warning signs, causes, and risk factors for suicide, as well as understanding that suicide risk can be treated and that suicide is preventable. Respondents with negative views of people who die by suicide (e.g., that they are cowardly, irresponsible, or immoral) were significantly more likely to have negative attitudes toward help-seeking (e.g. that talking to a mental health professional is not the best way to solve emotional problems) and less likely to seek help from a mental health professional if they experienced such problems than other people.