Characteristics of Crisis Line Users Who Died by Suicide

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Among Northern Ireland’s crisis line users, receiving check-in calls and using the service for a longer duration may lower the risk of suicide death. These extra supports may be particularly important for users with substance dependence or those who have made a prior suicide attempt.

Researchers used data from Northern Ireland’s Lifeline Client Information Management System to identify 118 of its crisis line users who died by suicide between 2008 and 2014. Comparing this deceased group with the general population of Lifeline users, they found several differences. Over 60% of Lifeline users who died by suicide were men, compared to 42% of general Lifeline users. Over 90% of crisis line users who died by suicide were between the ages of 18 and 54, compared with 64% of Lifeline users generally. Almost two-thirds of the deceased group (64%) presented with suicidal ideation or behaviors on their first call, compared with 27% of the general Lifeline user population. Based on these findings, the researchers used sex, age, and prior suicidal thoughts and behaviors to create a matched comparison group of 118 Lifeline crisis service users who had not died by suicide.

They found that those who reported substance dependence were 4.2 times more likely to die by suicide compared to matched controls. Those who had made a prior suicide attempt were 3.2 times more likely to die by suicide. Lifeline users who had not died by suicide had a longer duration of service use and were more likely to receive check-in services. This research underscores the importance of longer-term engagement and follow-up support for crisis line users, especially for those who report substance dependence or prior suicide attempts.
