

Module 1 – Prevalence and Comorbidity

Prevalence of Suicide



More than 38,000 deaths by suicide occur each year in the U.S.¹

Suicide rates across demographic groups are higher in rural counties than in urban counties.²

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in persons 25-34 years old in the U.S.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death in persons 15-24 years old in the U.S.

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death (all ages) in the U.S.³

In Primary Care:⁴

Up to 90% of people who die by suicide had contact with their primary care provider (PCP) in the year prior to their death.

Up to 76% had contact with their PCP in the month prior to their suicide.

These same individuals were more than twice as likely to have seen their PCP than a mental health professional in the year and month prior to their suicide.

Comorbidity

Mental illness is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for suicide, but is strongly associated with suicide:

More than 90% of people who die by suicide have a mental health disorder or substance abuse disorder, or both. (For youths under 16, that percentage is much lower, but still significant.)

More than 50% of suicides are associated with a major depressive episode.

At least 25% of suicides are associated with a substance abuse disorder, especially with alcohol abuse or dependence.

Ten percent of suicides are associated with a psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia.⁵

Aggressive treatment of psychiatric and substance use disorders is an important part of a comprehensive, primary-care based approach to suicide prevention.