MARYLAND: Higher Rural Suicide Rates Driven by Use of Guns

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Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News [1]

A recent study found that rural-urban differences in suicide rates in Maryland may be explained by differences in firearms use. Researchers examined state data from 2003 to 2015 and found that suicide rates were 35 percent higher in rural than urban counties. This rate difference was limited to firearm suicides, which were two-thirds higher in rural than urban areas. Men accounted for nearly 90 percent of firearm suicides and were more likely to die by suicide in rural areas, while women were more likely to die by suicide in urban areas. Greater access to firearms in rural counties, along with other factors, is likely associated with higher suicide rates, according to lead author Paul Sasha Nestadt, a postdoctoral fellow in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Psychiatric Epidemiology Training Program. Nestadt suggested that reducing gun access among people at risk may help decrease suicide rates, which is supported by previous studies. “It is often said that people would kill themselves anyway, even if they didn’t have access to guns,” he said. “There is an entire body of research that tells us that is simply not true.” The authors cautioned that their findings are limited to Maryland and may not be generalizable to other states.

Spark Extra! Read the study abstract [2].

Links within this resource

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