MINNESOTA: New Tool Helps Identify Patients’ Suicide Risk

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Research suggests that a new tool for predicting patient suicide risk may be effective. Using the medical records of three million patients, researchers examined common factors among those who attempted or died by suicide. After inputting the data into a predictive calculator, they found that patients with the highest risk scores had a significantly increased chance of attempting suicide compared to those with the lowest risk scores. Minnesota’s HealthPartners Institute, which coauthored the study, is considering ways to apply the tool in its health care system. One option is embedding it in the electronic medical record system for use at routine patient visits. Melissa Heinen, a suicide epidemiologist at the Minnesota Department of Health, said that better predictive tools can help improve prevention efforts. “People find help and hope, and that’s a big piece of this,” she said. “You can have a risk factor, and that doesn’t mean you’re going to end up with an attempt or death.”

Spark Extra! Read the researchers abstract [2].

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