Reaching Students At Risk for Suicide using an Interactive, Anonymous, Web-based Screening

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Outline

- AFSP’s Interactive Screening Program
- Demonstration of Program
- UMaine’s Data and Outcomes
- Emory’s Data and Future Directions
- Panel Discussion
Interactive Screening Program

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- Anonymous, web-based screening for suicide risk factors
- Personalized support from a counselor
Impetus for the ISP

- In 2000, AFSP was approached by families who lost a college student to suicide.
- Students’ mental health problems had not been recognized by their institutions or families.
- Urged development of a systematic way for institutions to proactively identify at-risk students and support them to get treatment.
Unrecognized/Untreated Risk

- Over 80% of students who die by suicide annually are not known by the campus counseling center
  
  (Gallagher, National Survey of Counseling Center Directors, 1980-2008)

- Less than 25% of students with diagnosable mental disorders report treatment within the past year
  
  (Blanco et al, 2008; ACHA, 2008)

- Only half of those who seriously consider suicide disclose this to anyone
  
  (Drum et al, 2009)
Interactive Screening Program

- Assumes that students have good reasons and personal reasons for not seeking mental health treatment
- Provides anonymity as a first step in help seeking
- Lowers the barrier for access to services
- Reaches the students who do not come in
ISP: Details

- Online ANONYMOUS depression screening
- Rated as:
  - Tier 1(A & B)– High Risk
  - Tier 2 – Moderate Risk
  - Tier 3 – Low Risk
- Personalized Feedback (24-48 hours)
- Anonymous Dialogue
Demonstration: Interactive Screening Program

Kylie G. Cole, Ph.D.
How ISP Works

Students are invited to participate via email from a college official.

The student invitation provides a link to a secure, customized website where a welcome page explains program procedures.

Students choose an individual ID and password then complete an online Stress & Depression Questionnaire.
Implementation

- 250 email invitations, 5 times per semester
  - All incoming students
  - Open link from CC website
- Two clinicians per mailing
  - First session counselor is same
- Time commitment per clinician
  - 1 hrs/week (reading, responding, reports)
  - 2-3 hrs/week (clinical)
**Screening Tool**

**Stress & Depression Questionnaire**

*Please answer every question to the best of your ability.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>A lot of the time</th>
<th>Most or all of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling nervous or worrying a lot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Becoming easily annoyed or irritable</td>
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<td>Feeling your life is too stressful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having arguments or fights</td>
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<td>Feeling intensely anxious or having anxiety attacks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling intensely lonely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling intensely angry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling hopeless</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling desperate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling out of control</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Screening Tool

#### Questionnaire Excerpt

**Welcome | Questionnaire | Response to Questionnaire | Dialogue | Update | Admin**

**During the last 4 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling nervous or worrying a lot</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>A lot of the time</th>
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<td>Becoming easily annoyed or irritable</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Clinician’s Response

Welcome | Questionnaire | Response to Questionnaire | Dialogue | Update | Admin

Status: Assessment Complete  Last Update: 01/20/2010 12:31 PM

Template: Tier 1A  Submit Date: 01/19/2010 6:19PM

Clinician Response to Questionnaire for User ID: M45341  Student W: 4813
Student reviewed Response to Questionnaire on 01/20/2010

Kylie G. Cole, Ph.D
Counseling Center and Peer Education Program
University of Maine at Orono
The Division of Student Affairs
University of Maine
5721 Cutler Health Center
Orono, ME 04469
Tel: 207-581-1392 (main number for Counseling Center)

My name is Kylie Cole and I’m a Clinician and Prevention Coordinator here at the University of Maine Counseling Center. I have reviewed your responses to the Stress & Depression Screening Questionnaire and am particularly concerned that you have recently been feeling hopeless, anxious, and irritable. You also say in the questionnaire that you often feel concerned about your weight and that these feelings are making your life very difficult.

I believe I can help you, and hope you will call or email me to set up a time we can get together within the next day or two.

If you would rather talk to me without coming in or identifying yourself,
Sample Dialogue

12/20/2010 I don’t feel like I am making a difference in anyone’s lives. I feel that I am a burden to most/ almost everybody. I feel like people are just putting up a facade, pretending that they like me to my face and then backstabbing me when I turn around. They are putting on this facade in order not to be responsible for making me sad/ angry. I am sick and tired of putting up a facade myself in pretending everything is alright. Sometimes I wonder if it would change anything if I wasn’t around and then I think that I wouldn’t.

Counselor 12/20/2010 Okay, well it sounds like we’ll have to do the best we can by using this as a way to communicate until you return to school. First, I want to give you a number for a Crisis Line that you can call if you need someone to talk to anytime day or night. I will not always be immediately available to answer these “dialogues”, so I want to make sure you have an immediate outlet. The number is 1-888-558-1112. I’m glad you have even a small handful of people in your life that you feel like you can confide in about this. What would you like to talk about? Kylie

12/19/2010 The feelings started several weeks ago. I really cannot afford to see anyone down here or let my family know what is going on. Only a handful of people know what is going on and I would like it to stay that way.

Counselor 12/19/2010 Sure. I could also make some recommendations for a counselor in your area if you let me know where you are. Since you are having suicidal thoughts at times, I want to make sure we find all the resources we can for you. Would you like to tell me a bit about when the feelings of depression started for you? Kylie

12/19/2010 Unfortunately I am not in the area (about an hour and a half away). Could we just chat over dialogue during break?

Counselor 12/19/2010 That sounds really hard if you are hurting and on top of that you are worried about burdening others. Are you still in the area? If so, we could meet on Monday.

12/17/2010 I don’t feel like that I am making a difference and some of my “friends” are showing how much I am a burden to them recently. I would very much like to talk...I feel like a burden to most people and I only have one or two friends that I can trust and that I feel like I am making a difference in.
Community Response

- Student
- Faculty/Staff
- Liability
Umaine Data

Daniela Veliz, M.Ed.
Touchstone Web Data 2010

- 3,338 invitations sent to incoming students since 2009
- 399 respondents (7.7% response rate)
21.3% came into the Counseling Center
78.7% did not come
39.1% engaged in online dialogue (1-13 exchanges) and 60.9% did NOT engage in online dialogue.
Students who dialogued were twice as likely to come to the Counseling Center.
Touchstone Web Data 2010

- 64.4% email
- 35.6% website
- Business cards were distributed with the link to the website (Fall 2010)
Emory University ISP

- We are targeting graduate and professional schools through the ISP.
- Approximately 200 graduate students are included in each ISP round; one round occurs every 4-6 weeks.
- As of 12/31/10, 625 students from 12 departments have received questionnaires through the ISP program.
To increase response rates and personal connections with students:

- Build upon institutional values and community strengths (appeal to values of scholarship through research; self-awareness, mindfulness, and self-care)
- Provide informational presentations about ISP to key administrators, faculty, and graduate student leaders to increase buy-in and connect ISP outcomes to the aspirational goals of our grant.

Emory ISP Protocol
Emory ISP Protocol

- Send personal letters from the Dean of the Graduate School to Department Heads and Directors of Graduate Studies one week prior to the ISP student invitation notifying them of the upcoming release date and asking them to encourage student participation.
- Send personal email from the President of the Graduate Student Council personally asking students to participate from a peer perspective.
Emory ISP Protocol

- Engage in regular dialogue with key stakeholders in order to consider how information gained through the ISP reflects upon student needs and ways in which the University can appropriately and systemically respond.
Outcomes

- Emory’s first ISP round garnered an unprecedented 30% percent response rate (average response rate is 8-10%)
- Subsequent rounds have garnered response rates of 26% (October), 13% (November) and 6% (December) – response rates reflect department cultural differences and time in the semester
Outcomes

- 123 assessments were completed
- 38 students engaged in dialogue for a total of 72 dialogues
- 10 in-person meetings were held, all of which led to follow-up with individually created treatment plans
Outcomes

- **Vignettes**
  - Agoraphobic student – 1 student reported that for 2 years she was too afraid to leave her home to seek services or to call the counseling center to make an appointment, but that the personal outreach of the ISP program enabled her to manage her anxiety enough for an in-person ISP related meeting and subsequently for therapy.
Outcomes

- Vignettes
  - Departmental unhappiness - Several students reported concerns about departmental politics that led to stress, depression, and suicidal ideation and the ISP interactions led them to helpful meetings with the Dean’s Office and other specific resources and resulted in a meeting between Emory Cares 4 U leadership and the graduate school to develop creative strategies for addressing department-specific concerns associated with student distress.
Questions?

Panel Discussion

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