

TAKE-HOME NOTES:**Suicides in prison**

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In this module we have presented current knowledge of:

- the incidence of suicide
- epidemiology of suicide
- risk factors and prevention of suicide in prisons.

In summary:

- Suicide rates are higher in prisoners than in the age-matched general population.
- More than 90% of suicides are by hanging or self-strangulation.
- Both prison-related and individual factors appear to be important in explaining prisoner suicide.
- Clinical factors including psychiatric diagnoses have strong associations with suicide in prison.
- Prison suicide prevention programmes often incorporate a number of measures, including:
 - staff training
 - ongoing risk assessment
 - environmental, pharmacological and psychosocial interventions.
- Not all suicidal behaviour in prisoners may be prevented.
- The well-being of staff and prisoners should be considered in the aftermath of a suicide or attempted suicide in prison.

Reflection

(1.1) Which occupational groups in the general population do you think might be most at risk of suicide?

(1.4) At a rough guess, how many people would you think are incarcerated in England and Wales, and in Scotland, per 100,000? How would you think the incarceration figures in the UK compare with other countries?

(2.2) What do you think might be some common triggers of prisoner suicide?

(3.5) How might these figures change your assessment of suicide risk in prisoners?

(3.9) What do you think might be potential environmental risk factors for prisoner suicides?

(4.6) Which factors do you think should be considered during intake screening? What kind of warning signs might you be looking for?

(4.10) How should documentation about the status of prisoners at risk be best prepared for information-sharing?

(4.12) What is your knowledge of social intervention measures that are used to lessen the risk of suicide among prisoners?

(4.13) What preventative steps do you think can be taken regarding the physical environment of prisoners at risk of suicide?

(4.14) What adjustments do you think might be made in order to create a 'safe' prison cell?

(4.19) Can you think of any further strategies that could be used to prevent suicides in prison?

(5.1) What do you think suicide prevention programmes should include as part of their overall strategy? Which initial factors should they address?

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