

MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE

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Suicide is one of the most important issues related to men's mental health (Bilsker & White 2011, Rutz & Rihmer 2007, Sher 2006). Suicide in men is a silent epidemic and an important contributor to men's mortality. Men commit suicide 3–10 times more often than women (Rutz & Rihmer 2007). They frequently use the highly lethal methods of firearms and hanging (Bilsker & White 2011). Male rates are greater than female rates at all ages. It is believed that suicidality in men is significantly influenced by socioeconomic factors such as income, wealth and employment status (Sher 2006).

Current research suggests that about 70–90% of all suicides are committed by individuals who are depressed (Rutz & Rihmer 2007). Depression is believed to be a typically and largely female condition. In fact, men are as frequently depressed as women (Rutz & Rihmer 2007). However, often men do not seek help for depression. The traditional male gender role is characterized by attributes such as striving for power and dominance, aggressiveness, independency, efficiency, rationality, competitiveness, success, and control (Murphy 1998, Rutz & Rihmer 2007, Sher 2006). Men want to look good "at all costs" and to maintain an appearance of being in control. Disclosing feelings of depression, anxiety and hopelessness is to accept weakness. In the competitive men's world displaying weakness gives advantage to others. Men may even conceal the depth of their misery from the treating clinicians.

Men's lack of help seeking may also be related to a lack of training and responsiveness from clinicians who frequently approach depressed and/or suicidal men in an awkward, incompetent and unconcerned manner. Often

depression and/or suicidality in men is not detected because of concomitant aggressive, impulsive behavior, and/or alcohol/drug abuse that often mislead to diagnoses of personality disorders and/or substance use disorder as well as an unempathic focus away from the underlying depression (Rutz & Rihmer 2007). Do many men believe that there is no help available for them and therefore, they do not cry for help? Do many men believe that no one will feel sympathy for them and they are on their own?

Clearly, a recognition of depression and suicidality in men needs improvement. Prevention of suicide in men necessitates more attention from clinicians, researchers, and policy makers. More research is needed to understand all aspects of depression and suicidality in men.

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