The School of Psychology invites you to a Special Seminar with

Alan Apter MD
Schneider's Children's Medical Center of Israel

on:

Case Finding and Adolescent Suicide Prevention

Thursday, December 08, 2011, 10:00, Faculty room, IDC Herzliya Campus

Introduction: Adolescent suicide is a major public health problem. The detection of at risk individuals is a major goal of any prevention program. Many different strategies have been proposed but empirical evidence as to which methods are best is lacking.

Objectives: To compare three methods of detecting at risk adolescents in a high school population. These were 1. Educating gatekeepers (teachers) in identifying potential suicide victims 2. Awareness training for pupils so that they can identify and refer peers who are in danger. 3. Mass screening of classes by questionnaires for various suicide risk factors

Methods: 12 high-schools were randomly chosen from schools throughout Israel. 1200 pupils completed self report questionnaires regarding suicide ideation or attempt (Paykel Suicide Scale), psychopathology (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; Beck Depression Inventory; Zung Anxiety Scale), life styles (Global School-based Student Health Survey), socio-demographic background, non-suicidal self injury, life events and social support. For ethical reasons questionnaires were screened for severe suicidal ideation or behavior and those subjects were interviewed by school counselor.

Preliminary results: The study is designed to be longitudinal and prospective. Where we present only the first cross-sectional analysis. 12.1% of students thought about suicide during the past 2 weeks while 6.8% of students had a suicide plan. 9.7% of students had attempted suicide. 34% of those needed medical care after the attempt and 25.2% of the attempters had made repeated attempts. Mass screening by questionnaire was over sensitive and identifies 50% of pupils as being at risk. Gate-Keeper training and student awareness training lacked sensitivity and hardly identified any at risk pupils.

The best results were obtained by a two-question screen which had reasonable sensitivity and specificity and is cheap and easy to perform. Follow up will allow to confirm these results.