

Watchdog Calls into Question Reliance on Risk Assessments During Suicide Awareness Month

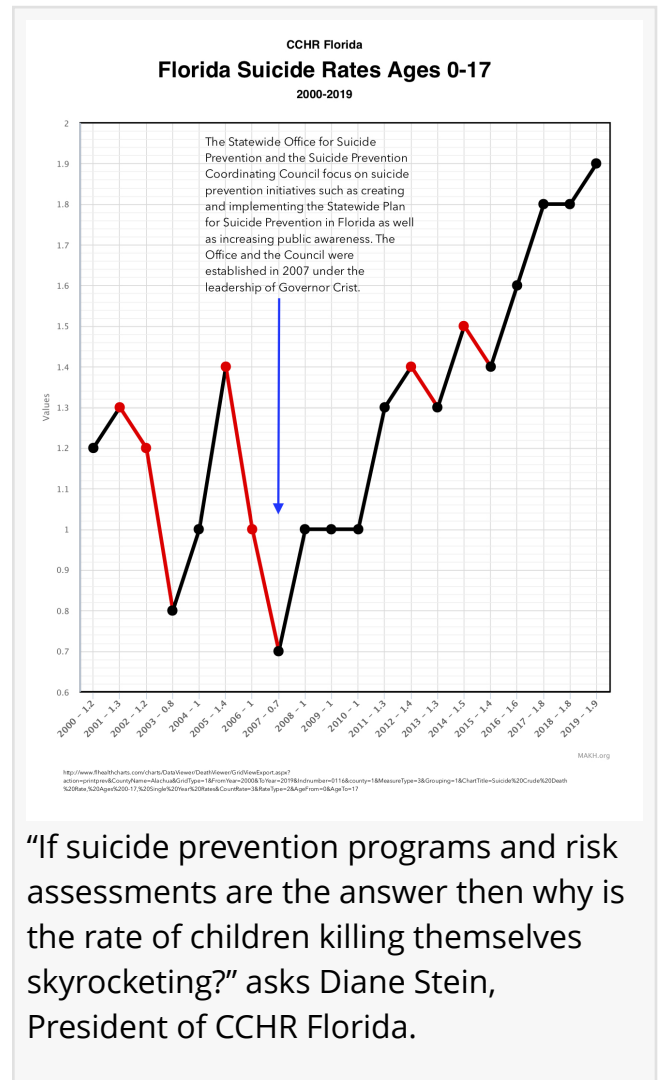
Experts in the field have repeatedly concluded that there is not any one scale that can predict who will commit suicide to any useful degree.

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, September 1, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Each year September is recognized as Suicide Awareness Month with September 6th through the 12th observed as National Suicide Prevention Week. The stated intention of these campaigns is to “inform and engage health professionals and the general public about suicide prevention and warning signs of suicide”. [1]

This year, in large part due to COVID-19, mental health advocates are predicting that “suicide is likely to become a more pressing concern as the pandemic spreads and has longer-term effects on the general population, the economy, and vulnerable groups”. One solution being offered up is [suicide risk assessments](#). [2]

However, these advocates are ignoring the fact that a study of the past 40 years of suicide risk assessment research suggests that not only do these assessments not help but may actually cause harm by increasing the risk of suicide. [3,4]

Each year an average of 44,965 people commit suicide in the United States making it the 10th leading cause of death for Americans. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide deaths were more than double those due to homicides in 2015, which means that for every murder reported in the news, there were at least 2 other deaths that occurred due to suicide. [5,6,7]



“If suicide prevention programs and risk assessments are the answer then why is the rate of children killing themselves skyrocketing?” asks Diane Stein, President of CCHR Florida.

Additionally, suicide is the second-leading cause of death in young people in the US today and once again suicide risk assessment is often touted as the answer but experts in the field have repeatedly concluded that there is not any one scale that can predict who will commit suicide to any useful degree. [8,9]



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Risk assessments, screenings, [school mental health programs](#) and more funding are often presented as the solutions to suicides rates and now with the current pandemic calls for more screenings are louder than ever, but according to the Florida chapter of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), a mental health watchdog organization, these so-called solutions are contributing to the problem.

“

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*Diane Stein, President CCHR
Florida*

“If suicide prevention programs and risk assessments are the answer then why is the rate of children killing themselves skyrocketing?” asks Diane Stein, President of CCHR Florida. [10]

CCHR’s recent analysis of available information from the Florida Department of Health, showed that the rate of youth suicides in Florida has continued to climb despite the time and money spent on programs to prevent suicide.

Could this be because suicide risk assessments don’t work and some assessments are even viewed as “junk

science”?

Citing an article published in Scientific American which reported that a study of the past 40 years of suicide risk assessment research suggests that not only do these assessments not help but may actually cause harm by increasing the risk of suicide, CCHR believes that the misguided reliance on screenings, assessments and psychiatric drugs is clouding the search for real answers. [11]

“Why are suicide risk assessments still being used almost 10 years after the National Institute for

Health and Care Excellence recommended that ‘assessment tools’ not be used?” asked Diane Stein. [12]

Even more alarming is a study published in February in the journal *Psychology Science in the Public Interest* by a group of lawyers and psychologists which found that many tests used in courtrooms are considered scientifically unreliable; in the headline, the journal dubbed them “junk science.” According to the study, a team of lawyers and psychologists reviewed 364 exams used in the legal system, finding a third of them don’t pass muster with forensic mental health experts. [13]

CCHR believes that normal responses to adversity are being labeled as mental illness and that instead of getting help people, including children, are being given dangerous drugs with side effects that include suicidal ideation and completed suicide.

This belief is not unfounded. Alison Escalante reported in an article this month titled “Researchers Doubt That Certain Mental Disorders Are Disorders At All”, how “in a compelling new paper, biological anthropologists call on the scientific community to rethink mental illness.” Escalante goes on to report that, “with a thorough review of the evidence, they show good reasons to think of depression or PTSD as responses to adversity rather than chemical imbalances. And ADHD could be a way of functioning that evolved in an ancestral environment, but doesn’t match the way we live today.” [14]

In addition to the risks when it comes to evaluating suicide through the use of unworkable assessments and screenings, CCHR is also alerting parents about the side effects of the drugs commonly prescribed when a child is labeled as mentally ill; side effects which include suicidal



Nearly two-thirds of the newspaper stories linking the holidays and suicide over the 2016-17 holiday season supported a false connection between the two, the Annenberg Public Policy Center has found.

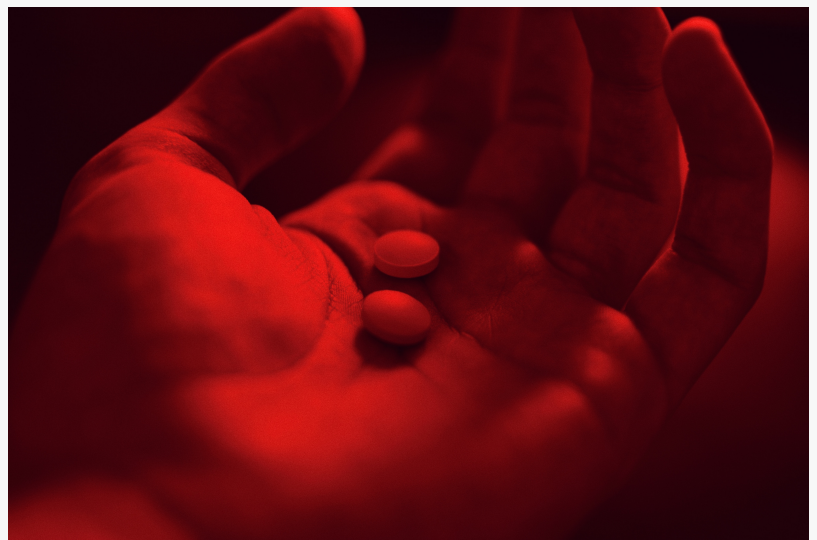


Millions of children are given psychiatric labels for normal childhood behavior and prescribed psychiatric drugs that drive them to commit violent acts and suicide.

ideation. [15]

“There are almost 3.4 million children in this country taking psychiatric drugs for ADHD and almost 70,000 of these children are age 5 and under,” stated Stein. “It is known that children labeled with ADHD are at a greater risk for suicide yet the fact that the psychiatric drugs prescribed to ‘treat’ ADHD have suicidal ideation as a side effect is ignored.” [16]

“Parents need to not only know the risks associated with these drugs but also that they have the right in Florida to refuse psychological screening and drugging of their child,” said Stein. [17]



NBC News reported on April 22, 2018 that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) findings show that suicides in the U.S. are at the highest level in “almost three decades”.

CCHR has challenged policy makers in Florida to start looking into the profession that has been charged with solving rising suicides, if they truly want to arrest the rate of suicides, especially youth suicides.

“Psychiatry has turned the labeling and marketing of normal human behavior as mental illness into an \$80 billion psychotropic drug industry and they need to be held accountable for the lives lost,” said Stein.

To learn more about parental rights, suicide and [psychiatric drug side effects](#) please contact CCHR at 800-782-2878 or visit the center in downtown Clearwater at 109 N. Fort Harrison Ave.

About CCHR: Initially established by the Church of Scientology and renowned psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Szasz in 1969, CCHR’s mission is to eradicate abuses committed under the guise of mental health and enact patient and consumer protections. L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, first brought psychiatric imprisonment to wide public notice: “Thousands and thousands are seized without process of law, every week, over the ‘free world’ tortured, castrated, killed. All in the name of ‘mental health,’” he wrote in March 1969. For more information please visit www.cchrflorida.org.

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