

CCHR: As Suicide Awareness Month Approaches, Reliance on Risk Assessments Questioned

Research into 40 years of suicide risk assessment data suggests that not only do these screenings not help but they may actually increase the risk of suicide.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Each year September is nationally recognized as [Suicide Awareness Month](#). The stated intention of this campaign is to “inform and engage health professionals and the general public about suicide prevention and warning signs of suicide”. However, experts report that, “because suicide is a relatively rare event, and suicidal intent can change rapidly, it is not possible to predict which patient will or will not attempt or die by suicide at any given point in time.” [1,2]



The headquarters for CCHR Florida are located in downtown Clearwater.

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If proof is needed that suicide risk assessments do not work all you need to do is look at the increasing number of people taking their lives despite ever increasing mental health access and funding.”

Diane Stein, President CCHR Florida

Unfortunately, the one solution offered up most frequently is the increased screening of individuals through the use of [suicide risk assessment](#) tools. This year is no different with the call possibly being louder due in large part to COVID-19 and mental health advocates predictions 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”. While the jury is still out as to whether or not the pandemic results in increased suicides, the numbers tell a different story. A recent article in the Washington Post revealed that a “new report says that preliminary data indicated that suicides actually fell in 2020.” [3, 4]

One fact is certain though, suicide risk assessments may be contributing to the long term increase in suicide rates. 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. [5,6]

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death for Americans with an average of 47,511 people committing suicide annually. 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. [7,8,9]

Equally disturbing is that suicide is the second-leading cause of death in young people in the United States and once again suicide risk assessment is often promoted as the solution despite experts in the field repeatedly reporting that there is not any one scale that can predict who will commit suicide to any useful degree. [10,11]

While risk assessments, screenings, school mental health programs and more funding are often presented as the solutions to suicides rates, the Florida chapter of the [Citizens Commission on Human Rights](#) (CCHR), a mental health watchdog organization, believes these so-called solutions are contributing to the problem.

According to Diane Stein, the president for CCHR Florida, how much Florida spends on mental health per capita compared to other states is regularly brought up during discussions of how to help those people who are in crisis; and Maine is often used to show why Florida should increase access to mental health as well increase mental health funding. However, what is never mentioned is that despite a per capita spending of \$375 on mental health, Maine has a serious



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suicide problem. The suicide death rate per 100,000 population in Maine is 18.45 while nationally it is 14.21 which is significantly lower than the rate in Maine. [12,13]

"If increasing mental health access and funding was the solution to suicide, shouldn't Maine have the lowest rate in the country?" asks Diane Stein. "Florida, for example, reportedly has low access and the lowest funding and yet Florida also has one of the lower suicide rates in the country." [14]

Referencing 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. [15]

"A decade after the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommended that 'assessment tools' not be used so called experts are calling for greater use of suicide risk assessments which makes no sense," stated Ms. Stein. [16]

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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