How do healthcare workers understand suicide prevention in later life?

Complex, influenced by many factors, and with increased risk of suicide

We spoke with 20 doctors, nurses, social workers & psychologists across Ireland to ask how they understand self-harm in older adults





High risk

"Generally, if older people self-harm that's really serious and really high risk. I think there is a one in two chance of a completed suicide after that". Doctor

Hidden: because of shame and stigma, self-harm may be presented as physical complaints



Support should be offered within the community to avoid stigma and shame

"Older people are often a lot less forthcoming. You have to really tease it out, do much more probing with older adults. There seems to be more awareness in the younger population to seek help for these things compared to the older population". Doctor

Integrated care needed with improved communication between those offering support



"I think it is really a multidisciplinary approach. It is not just one type of picture, there could be very different needs. It really depends on the patient and their needs. The best outcomes are if all the disciplines are working together". Nurse

Data source: Troya MI, Lonergan C, Cassidy E, Griffin E, Lovejoy SA, Mughal F, Russell V, Arensman E. Healthcare practitioners' views of self-harm management practices in older adults in Ireland: A qualitative study. International journal of geriatric psychiatry. 2024 Jul;39(7):e6116.

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