

Summary

The relationship between suicide prevention training and student counsellor self-efficacy

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Background and Research Aims

In Australia, suicide is the lead cause of death between the ages of 15-44 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016). It has also increased since 2013 by 13.5% leading to increased attention of how we approach treatment and prevention of suicide (ABS, 2016). Suicide has an enormous emotional impact on family, friends, peers and community with contributing economic impacts on healthcare (Australian Healthcare Associates, 2014). It is a myth that people who end up suiciding do so alone without contacting anyone as those who are suicidal often make contact with a primary care provider (Luoma, Martin & Pearson, 2002; Vasiliadis, Ngamini-Ngui & Lesage, 2015). Despite this, studies suggest a relatively low proportion of mental health professionals feel they are adequately trained in suicide risk assessment and management (Morris & Minton, 2012; Reeves, 2010; Schmitz et al., 2012). The present investigation examined the relationship of suicide prevention training on the confidence level of student mental health professionals to handle suicide risk assessment and management.

Methodology

An online survey was conducted ($n = 96$), to examine the relationship between students' confidence level, measured by self-efficacy on 2 questionnaires on their ability to deal with a variety of counselling and suicide risk assessment domains. Participants from a variety of educational institutions were sampled.

Results

Overall, 53% of the sample had no prior suicide training, with 20% receiving less than 2 days training, and 26% with greater than 2 days training. Training significantly increased student self-efficacy around suicide assessment and management tasks. This effect was also demonstrated after controlling for general counselling skills against suicide counselling skills.

Conclusions and Future Directions

This study demonstrated that suicide specific training significantly increases self-efficacy levels and confidence to deal with suicide. It controlled for general counselling skills and found areas of high confidence was around assessment and people were less confident around intervening in suicide. This study highlights the need for suicide prevention training programs to be incorporated into our educational institutions, especially where mental health professionals are concerned. With a high likelihood of seeing suicidal clients, counsellors and psychologists must be adequately trained to ensure the best possible care. Future research could examine these areas on different professions such as nursing as they are also likely to come across a suicidal client.

References

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