Mental health disorders and the risk of attempted suicide

The risk of attempted suicide that may be associated with psychiatric disorders is not unique to any single mental health disorder according to research published in Molecular Psychiatry this week. The study suggests that a factor common to all mental health disorders may be involved.

Previous research has found that when studied independently, some mental health disorders are associated with an elevated risk for suicide attempt. However, many mental disorders often co-occur and it is unclear whether the increased risk of suicide attempt is due to a specific mental disorder or other factors.

Nicolas Hoertel, Carlos Blanco and colleagues analysed data from 34,653 participants in a nationally representative face-to-face survey of the adult population in the US. Participants were questioned twice over a three-year period and mental disorders were assessed using a diagnostic interview administered by trained interviewers. The authors found that mental disorders were associated with the risk of suicide attempt. However, this association related to an overall predisposition towards mental illness and was not specific to a single disorder. The authors note that this study does not establish a causal relationship between mental disorders and the occurrence of suicide attempts.

Further studies are required to examine if this association may differ over different periods of time and to identify the psychological and biological processes that may be involved.

ARTICLE DETAILS

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