

PREVENTING SUICIDE

A RESOURCE FOR NON-FATAL SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR CASE REGISTRATION



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FOREWORD

Suicide is a complex phenomenon that has attracted the attention of philosophers, theologians, physicians, sociologists and artists over the centuries. It is estimated that almost one million deaths are due to suicide every year, the majority of which occur in low- and middle-income countries. Many of those who attempt suicide require medical attention and they are at high risk for completing suicide. As suicide is the second leading cause of death globally for 10-24 year olds, there is a massive loss of young people to societies around the world, which does not take into account the ripple effect suicide has on the lives of many families, friends, colleagues, and communities.

As a serious public health problem it demands our attention, but its prevention and control, unfortunately, are no easy task. State-of-the-art research indicates that the prevention of suicide, while feasible, involves a whole series of activities, ranging from the provision of the best possible conditions for bringing up our children and youth, through the effective treatment of mental disorders, to the environmental control of risk factors. Appropriate dissemination of information and awareness-raising are essential elements in the success of suicide prevention programmes.

In 1999 WHO launched the SUPRE programme (Suicide Prevention), its worldwide initiative for the prevention of suicide. This booklet is one of a series of resources prepared as part of SUPRE and addressed to specific social and professional groups that are particularly relevant to the prevention of suicide (primary health care workers, media professionals, etc.). It represents a link in a long and diversified chain involving a wide range of people and groups, including health professionals, educators, social agencies, governments, legislators, social communicators, law enforcers, families and communities. After the publication of a booklet on suicide case registration, this booklet more specifically is aimed at staff in hospital emergency departments or other emergency-care settings and at the diverse health-care providers attending to

persons who harmed themselves as well as the relevant administrators responsible for registries.

The resources are now being widely disseminated, in the hope that they will be translated and adapted to local conditions - a prerequisite for their effectiveness. Comments and requests for permission to translate and adapt them will be welcome.

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