

World Suicide Prevention Day

Manjeet Kumar* and Kalpana Sharma

Assistant Professor, IGMCM Shimla, HP, India

***Corresponding Author:** Manjeet Kumar, Assistant Professor, IGMCM Shimla, HP, India.

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The appalling statistics of 1 suicide in every 40 seconds or 3000 suicides per day is abhorrent to us all. It is the 13th most common cause of death, albeit it is the commonest cause in 15 - 24 years of age. Males' suicides are 3 times more common than female suicides, although female suicide attempts are high. Gender disparity is due to the more fatal methods adopted by males for suicides. India has the highest suicide rate 13.3 per lakh in southeast Asia. There has been the involvement of various international health organizations such as the International Association for Suicide Prevention, World Health Organization, and World Federation for Mental Health for commitment to resolve this gruesome pandemic. The 10th September is celebrated as world suicide prevention day. The previous years' (2018 - 2020) themes for the prevention of suicides were "working together to prevent suicide".

Eight lakh people died by suicide each year and about 1.39 lakhs (17.5%) are Indians. Southern and eastern states have the highest suicides rates in India. The most common methods used in suicides are poisoning (33%), hanging (26%), and self-immolation (9%). In the ongoing covid pandemic, suicides are rampant across India due to lockdown, loneliness, hopelessness, stress, fear of testing positive for covid 19, burnout in frontline works, loss of employment, and economic difficulties.

Following measures can contribute to suicide prevention:

1. Education and advertising of mental health disorders. Diagnosing and treating these disorders can prevent thousands of lives.
2. Creating awareness about suicides and mental health disorders instead of them being considered taboo.
3. Creating societies or groups in offices, residential areas, towns, cities, schools, colleges, and other institutions to look for isolated, stressed, depressed, economically impoverished people and resolving their problems.
4. Creating helplines to reach out to those needing help in crises.
5. Educating health personals to keep in mind this aspect in those people with Covid 19 disease, terminal ill disorders, mental health disorders.
6. Proactively decreasing stress, anxiety, loneliness and promoting happiness, stress-relieving programs, counselling those affected, bringing together those left out, wherever we work.
7. Increasing the number of mental health professionals. We have 1 mental health professional for every 4-lakh people.
8. Creating programs and policies towards suicides prevention. From the fear of law to support of the law in affected people.

Suicide is emerging as one of the major health concerns in India. We need mass campaigns, collaboration among health care providers, school teachers, leaders of communities, and government. Exact data need to be extracted because of underreporting suicides so that various aspects of suicides can be studied. Thereupon, as health professionals we should commit ourselves to suicide prevention, to save innocent young lives on 10th September.

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