

Addressing Suicidality in a Family Medicine Residency Clinic

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Rationale

- Family physicians are often the sole providers of mental health care
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States ¹
- According to a large national study, nearly 50% of suicide completers had seen a healthcare provider within a month prior to death ²
- PHQ-9 item #9 has shown to be a strong predictor of suicide attempts and death ³

9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way

Not At all	Several Days	More Than Half the Days	Nearly Every Day
0	1	2	3

- Patients whose PHQ-9s were addressed by their PCP were twice as likely to follow up ⁴
- Malpractice implications for failure to address positive response to item #9



Methods

- Chart review of 143 consecutive PHQ-9s with positive suicide item (anything > 0)
- 5 month study period
- Large family medicine residency program in urban underserved setting
- Looking for documentation of suicidality in patient chart

Results

- Over half (57%) of encounters in which the patient disclosed suicidality on a depression screener did not have any provider documentation regarding further assessment**
- No statistically significant difference in total PHQ-9 score or item #9 score between patients for whom suicidality was documented and those for whom it was not
- FM residents were significantly more likely to document suicidality than FM faculty ($p = 0.0063$)
- Only 29% of all providers documented suicidality consistently in this 5-month period

Implications

- Missed opportunities to intervene and provide resources for suicide prevention
- Working with a patient population with many risk factors for suicide, we must find ways to increase our vigilance

What's Next

- Clinic-wide trainings on addressing item #9 on the PHQ-9
- Creation of Epic dotphrase to assist providers in assessing and documenting suicidality (including risk factors, intent/plan/barriers, and treatment plan)
- Creation of Epic dotphrase for patient instructions that describes local resources
- Repeat chart review over next 5 months to assess impact of training and creation of new dotphrases on documentation

References

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