Presentation

988 and Emergency Intervention: Facts, Myths and Challenges
Speaker:
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Chief Clinical Officer
Behavioral Health Response
Have you seen this?

people posting the suicide hotline number

Woah.

99% of suicidal people

This is worthless!
Memes Have Power Regardless of Truthfulness

“The majority of interviewed follow-up clients (callers to Lifeline) reported that the intervention stopped them from killing themselves (79.6%) and kept them safe (90.6%).”*

Or this?

Man Calls a Suicide Prevention Hotline, SWAT Team Shows Up and Kills Him

301 comments

Suicide prevented
Imminent Risk Situations are Inherently Messy

- Incredibly complicated
- In above case, individual
  - Consumed fifth of whiskey and bottle of pills & was heavily armed
  - Was discovered in car trunk with a gun in his mouth and a rifle by his side
  - Following a 5 hour SWAT team stand off
- Could (should) this have had a different ending?
  - YES!
- Should hotline have called for emergency intervention?
  - Still a big YES
Current Meme – notes 20% of police fatalities involve persons with mental illness

LIFE KIT
Social media posts warn people not to call 988. Here’s what you need to know

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ANERI PATTANI

“People with actual or assumed mental illnesses die at the hands of police at high rates, especially when they’re also people of color, trans people, immigrants and/or members of other marginalized groups,” Krebs said.’ (highlighting mine)

101 people were killed after police responded to reports of someone behaving erratically or having a mental health crisis.

- Mental Health/Welfare Check (101)
- Other Non-Violent Offense (218)
- Other Crimes Against People (65)
- Traffic Stop (115)
- Person with a Weapon (98)
- Violent Crime (396)
- Domestic Disturbance (76)
- None/Unknown (71)
83 people killed by police were **unarmed**.
Most **unarmed** people killed by police were **people of color**.
Number of 911 Calls and Police Traffic Stops Per Year?

270,000,000
Things That are True

• People of color are disproportionately impacted by police shootings
• Most of these are preventable, all are tragic and cannot be ignored
• HOWEVER
  The rate of police shootings of unarmed Americans is $\frac{83}{270,000,000}$ or 0.00000031
Use of Emergency Intervention

• Is not risk free – risk on both sides
• That being said, the risk of a 988 call leading to death of an unarmed American is infinitesimally low
• Despite this low risk, it is not zero and use of emergency intervention should never be taken lightly.
• So why do we do it?
Reasons for Involuntary Assistance

- Anosognosia
- Severely impaired judgment
- Self-Rescue
  - Up to 16% of those who attempt suicide engaged in self-rescue*
- Marked Ambivalence
  - 85-95% of those who attempt suicide regret decision following attempt and do not go on to die of suicide**
- Ethics
- Standards of Care

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Liability

“As the act of suicide is nearly impossible to predict, four key elements are often present for a claim of malpractice to be supported. These are (a) the presence of a professional relationship, (b) a violation of the standard of care, (c) the violation resulting in damages or harm, and (d) a direct causal relationship between the practitioner’s omissions and the suicidal act of the client”*

*Alonzo, D. & Gearing, R.E. 2017)Suicide Assessment and Treatment, 2nd Edition Empirical and Evidence-Based Practices
Improvements Needed

• Informed consent by 988 centers
• Better reporting and fact checking to avoid moral panics – there is a risk to scaring people away from calling 988
• Better training and accountability for law enforcement
• Narrow criteria for use of emergency intervention