

Suicide in Schizophrenia

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Suicide Rates

- Compared with the general population, an 8.5-fold greater risk of suicide
- 40%–50% of people with schizophrenia report suicidal ideation at some point in their lives
- 20%–50% have a history of suicide attempts
- 4%–13% eventually commit suicide

Highest Risk Early in Course

- Most completed suicides occur early; 50% occur within the first 2 years
- The risk is lifelong

Post-Release Risk

- More likely to commit suicide within the first few weeks or months after a hospital discharge
- 80% of patients with schizophrenia who committed suicide did so while in the hospital or within 6 months of discharge

Risk Factors

- Males
- Substance abuse, more impulsive, AMA discharge
- Previous attempts, greater lethality of attempts
- Hopelessness, depressive symptoms
- Highly severe illness
- Coexisting depressive symptoms
- Social support protective

AMA=against medical advice.

Valevski A et al. Eur Psychiatry. 2011;June 24. Epub ahead of print.

Treatment

- Reduce psychotic symptoms
- Reduce depressive symptoms
- Alleviate demoralization and despair
- Instill hope
- Address substance abuse and anxiety disorders
- Clozapine