

Elderly suicide risk after previous attempts varies by sex

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In older age groups, repeated suicide attempts constitute an increased risk for completed suicide in depressed women, while severe attempts constitute an increased risk for depressed men. Researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Psychiatry* studied suicide attempts in 100 patients who committed suicide and in an age- and sex-matched control group, investigating the effects of age on suicidal behaviour, as a risk factor for accomplished suicide.

Louise Brådvik and Mats Berglund, from Lund University, Sweden, studied the hospital records of patients admitted between 1956 and 1969 and followed up until 2006. According to Brådvik, "Men and women showed different patterns of suicide attempts in the older age groups. The risk for an initial [suicide attempt](#) reduced with age in all females and in male controls, but not in male victims, repetition and severity then showing a special pattern".

Speaking about the results, Brådvik said, "Suicide attempt is known to be one of the main predictors for suicide in depression. If attempts are repeated or serious, the risk for suicide is considered to be increased. However, to our knowledge, there has been no investigation into the predictive value of age at repeated and severe suicide attempt for accomplished suicide. In our study it appears that from middle age onwards, repeated attempts are a risk factor for suicide in women and so are severe attempts for men. In other words, though all suicide attempts should be taken seriously, an older woman who makes a repeated attempt is at higher risk for suicide and needs more observation and

treatment than a young female repeater. Correspondingly, an older man who makes a severe attempt (or an initial attempt) is in need of more observation".

The study concerns patients with severe depression (with psychotic and melancholic features) only. It is unknown if the findings are applicable for other depressives.

More information: Repetition and severity of suicide attempts across the life cycle: a comparison by age group between [suicide](#) victims and controls with severe depression, Louise Bradvik and Mats Berglund, *BMC Psychiatry* (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpsychiatry/

Source: BioMed Central ([news](#) : [web](#))

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