

Children's hospitals admissions for suicidal thoughts or actions double during past decade

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The number of children and adolescents admitted to children's hospitals for thoughts of suicide or self-harm more than doubled during the last decade, according to new research being presented at the 2017 Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting in San Francisco.

Researchers will present the study abstract, "Trends in Suicidality and Serious Self-Harm for Children 5-17 Years at 32 U.S. Children's Hospitals, 2008-2015," on Sunday, May 7, at the Moscone West Convention Center.

The study included administrative data from 32 [children's](#) hospitals across the U.S. and identified all emergency department and inpatient encounters between 2008 and 2015 for children between 5 and 17 years old with a discharge diagnosis of suicidality or serious [self-harm](#).

The researchers found a total of 118,363 such encounters at the children's hospitals during the period studied. Further analysis showed the annual percentage of all encounters identified as suicidality or self-harm more than doubled over the study period, increasing from 0.67 percent in 2008 to 1.79 percent in 2015.

Slightly more than half the patients with suicidal thoughts or actions (totaling 59,631) were with 15- to 17-year-olds, while 36.9 percent (43,682) were with 12- to 14-year-olds. An additional 12.7 percent

(15,050) of the encounters were with children between ages 5 and 11.

Significant increases were noted in all age groups but were higher among the older children, said lead author Gregory Plemmons, MD, an associate professor of pediatrics at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. Teens between ages 15 and 17 had an average annual increase of 0.27 percentage points, and 12- to 14-year-olds an average of 0.25 percent each year. This compares to 0.02 percent for 5- to 11-year-olds.

The study also revealed seasonal variations in the [suicidality](#) and self-harm cases, with the lowest percentage occurring during summer (June through August) and the highest during spring (March through May) and fall (September through November).

Plemmons said the study's finding echo trends identified in recent data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Research to understand factors contributing to these alarming trends is urgently needed," Dr. Plemmons said, adding that awareness of these trends is also critical for staff preparedness at children's hospitals.

Dr. Plemmons will present the abstract, "Trends in Suicidality and Serious Self-Harm for Children 5-17 Years at 32 U.S. Children's Hospitals, 2008-2015," beginning at 4:15 p.m.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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