

Pessimism around youth suicide prevention approaches is unfounded, study shows

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A comprehensive Australian study examining the global impact of suicide prevention approaches in young people has found that youth-specific interventions conducted in clinical, educational and community settings can be effective in reducing suicide-related behaviour in young people at risk.

The review, by researchers at Orygen, the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, has been published this week in the UK journal *E Clinical Medicine*.

The comprehensive review examined 99 individual studies of which 52 were conducted in clinical settings, 31 in educational or workplace settings, and 15 in community settings, and found interventions delivered in these settings appeared to reduce self-harm and suicidal thinking in [young people](#).

Large school-based studies showed that the interventions with the most promise for suicide prevention were integrated approaches, in particular those that combined educational workshops about suicide prevention with case detection designed to identify young people at risk.

In community settings it was also large-scale studies that combined a number of components that showed the most promise. Again, these typically included universal educational programs, training those who come into contact with at risk young people, screening for risk, and linking people to services, where appropriate.

The study's lead researcher, Dr. Jo Robinson, said the study findings challenged the pessimism that often pervades discussions around suicide prevention. "At a time when we're seeing suicide rates around the world growing, this study shows us that we should feel hopeful that interventions specifically designed to reduce suicide risk in young people do work and can impact on [suicide ideation](#) and self-harm," Dr. Robinson said.

"In Australia, we've seen a lot of investment in suicide prevention, but It's very important that this investment is directed in a strategic way and is being invested in evidence-based interventions.

"That's why this study is important, it will guide not just clinical services and interventions and research, but policy makers as well to ensure that we're putting funds into evidence-based suicide prevention interventions that work."

Despite the encouraging findings of the study, Dr. Robinson said the research had identified some clear gaps in suicide prevention approaches.

"Many studies simply tested interventions that had previously been designed for adults as opposed to young people specifically, there was also an absence of studies that included indigenous, same sex attracted and/or gender diverse young people and those who live in low to middle income countries," Dr. Robinson said.

"These findings suggest that important opportunities for youth [suicide prevention](#) are currently being missed and need to be addressed by researchers, research funders, and by policy makers, if we are to successfully address the rising rates of suicide among young people worldwide."

Provided by Orygen

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