Suicide rate for people with schizophrenia spectrum disorders 170 times higher
18 June 2020

"What this study teaches is us that although people with SSD are at higher risk for suicide, we can target those at the highest risk with changes in policy and treatment," said lead author Dr. Juveria Zaheer, Clinician Scientist at the CAMH Institute for Mental Health Policy Research.

"In the past clinicians have focused on treating the psychosis itself when it first appears," said senior author Dr. Paul Kurdyak, Director, Health Outcomes and Performance Evaluation, CAMH Institute for Mental Health Policy Research and Clinician Scientist at ICES. "This study shows that treatment has to include suicide prevention safety planning as well from the very beginning."

The authors suggest increasing the age limit for admission to first episode psychosis programs (most are closed to people over 30) and increasing the length of clinical follow-up care after a first episode of psychosis.

"Now that we know what is happening, we need to better understand why," said Dr. Zaheer. "Our next step will be to study the lived experience of people with SSD who have had suicidal ideation."


Provided by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health