

## Suicide – Let's take necessary steps to prevent it

Subedi S

*Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, UCMS, Bhairahawa, Nepal*

Email Corresponding Author: [sandipsubedi@hotmail.com](mailto:sandipsubedi@hotmail.com)

Suicide is defined as a potentially self-injurious behavior associated with expressed or implied intent to die.<sup>1</sup> It is a worldwide problem and has shown an upward surge across the world. Every 40 seconds a person commits suicide somewhere in the world and Every 3 seconds a person attempts to die. Suicide is among the top 20 leading causes of death globally in all ages<sup>2</sup> and is among the top three leading causes of death in those aged 15–44 years, accounting for more than 2% of all deaths in some central Asian countries. There is lack of data pertaining to suicide in Nepal and reported rates of completed suicide in Nepal vary from 3.7 to 10.32 per 100 000.<sup>3,4</sup> Lately, there has been reports suggesting that number of attempted suicide is increasing every year and affecting the youths more than before.

Some have reported that Hanging is one of the commonest modes of suicide, however the trend has changed in recent days. Majority of the attempted suicide cases in Nepal now a days is due to consumption of Poisons that are easily available in every household like organophosphorus compounds. One of the reasons for this could be its easy accessibility.

Suicide is a complex problem for which there is no single cause, no single reason. It results

from a complex interaction of biological, genetic, psychological, social, cultural and environmental factors. It is difficult to explain why some people decide to commit suicide while others in a similar or even worse situation do not.

Studies from both developing and developed countries have revealed an overall prevalence of mental disorders of 80-100% in cases of completed suicide. It is estimated that the lifetime risk of suicide in people with mood disorders (chiefly depression) is 6-15%; with alcoholism, 7-15%; and with schizophrenia, 4-10%.(Reference) The stigma of mental illness is an important barrier to accessing health care and evokes negative attitudes and feelings such as shame, disgrace, fear, disgust or hate. This can result in discrimination and rejection of the individual thus delaying the care of mentally ill.

Suicide not only affects the individual attempting it. The psychological, social and financial impact of suicide on the family and society is immeasurable. On average, single suicide intimately affects at least six other people. (Reference) If a suicide occurs in a school or workplace it has an impact on hundreds of people.

Though suicide is one of the commonest cause of death, Government of Nepal has never taken suicide as a serious issue. Suicide has never been a priority to prevent unnatural deaths.

Government of Nepal should take suicide as a major public health problem and should take actions to reduce suicide. It can take steps to regulate the use of various poisons used in agriculture. These poisons should be banned as far as possible and if not, they have to be distributed from official licensed shops only and only with prescriptions from agriculture technicians. Similarly, providing easy access to psychiatric treatments to public at large is important in preventing further death from suicide. For this the Government of Nepal should initiate action to integrate mental health treatment at primary health system. Government of Nepal should develop a national suicide prevention programme and empower primary health care staff to identify, assess, manage and refer the suicidal person in the community. Suicide is now a Public Health issue in all countries. It is the duty of all of us to take necessary steps in preventing it.

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