

Suicide Prevention among Young People: Findings from the Evaluation of Youth Aware of Mental Health in Australian Secondary Schools

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Abstract : Suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians aged 15-24 years, with rates increasing over the past decade. As young people can be particularly vulnerable to mental health problems and suicidal behavior, they are an essential and obvious target for suicide prevention efforts. This study investigates the effectiveness of the universal mental health promotion and suicide prevention program, Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM), to reduce suicidal ideation and attempts and increase help-seeking in young people. This trial took place in Australian schools across four regions in New South Wales that form part of LifeSpan, a larger multilevel suicide prevention research trial. The YAM program was delivered to Year 9 students in up to 78 schools over two years (from January 2017 to December 2019). All schools were invited to participate in YAM's evaluation, which included completing a student questionnaire at three time-points: baseline, 3-month post-intervention, and 6-month follow-up. The primary outcome is suicidal ideation severity. Secondary outcomes are new reports of suicide attempts, stigma towards suicide, knowledge about suicide, help-seeking intentions and behaviors, and depressive symptoms. Results from pre-post and follow-up data will be presented. These research findings are promising and will contribute to the evidence-based for YAM and suicide prevention programs in Australian schools. These findings are also expected to promote YAM's value and sustainability to be more widely delivered in Australian secondary schools.

Keywords : adolescent mental health, suicidal ideation, suicide prevention, universal program

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