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# Suicide Screening at TCHC

WILLIAM YAKUBIK

FM R6 JANUARY 2023

THOMAS CHITTENDEN HEALTH CENTER

# Need for Mental Health Care in Vermont

- ▶ According to United Health Foundation, depression rates in 2021 in Vermont were at 25.4% higher than the national average of 20.5%.
- ▶ According to the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) in 2018, Vermont had 1,091 hospital visits for intentional self-harm, with a rate 189.2 per 100,000.
- ▶ According to the VDH in 2019, there were 109 suicide deaths among Vermont residents, with a rate 15.3 per 100,000.
- ▶ Suicide is the 8th leading cause of death in the state (VDH).

# Unique Considerations

- ▶ Thomas Chittenden is a private owned practice and the largest private medical center in the state of Vermont. They serve a large population of Vermonters, but not being a part of the UVM Medical System poses a resource challenge.
- ▶ Vermont has limited access to mental health resources and does not have enough providers to handle the amount of mental health resources needed for the demand.

# Community Perspective

- ▶ TCHC has personally had patients with self-harm and completed suicides making this an issue that needs immediate attention at the practice. Yet suicide rates are increased throughout the whole state.
- ▶ Each provider works with a specific nurse and have their own workflow for their patients. This is helpful for the efficiency of patient care with regards to scheduling and preferences. Despite it improving patient care in some ways it means each provider does everything slightly different. Patients with mental health issues will be treated differently from every provider. This tool will allow each patient to receive a minimum standard of mental health care.

# Intervention and Methodology

▶ TCHC will require all providers to use the PHQ-9 and the CSSRS questions 1,2, and 6 at annuals or more frequent for those who strike suspicion per Zero Suicide initiative.

▶ This tool will be called: PHQ-9+3

## PATIENT HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE (PHQ-9)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?  
(use "✓" to indicate your answer)

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	0	1	2	3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	0	1	2	3
5. Poor appetite or overeating	0	1	2	3
6. Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down	0	1	2	3
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	0	1	2	3
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite—being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	0	1	2	3
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself	0	1	2	3

add columns     +  +

(Healthcare professional: For interpretation of TOTAL, TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_  
please refer to accompanying scoring card).

10. If you checked off <i>any</i> problems, how difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?	Not difficult at all	_____
	Somewhat difficult	_____
	Very difficult	_____
	Extremely difficult	_____

Always ask questions 1 and 2.	Past Month
1) Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?	
2) Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself?	



Always Ask Question 6	Life-time	Past 3 Months
6) Have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life? <i>Examples: Took pills, tried to shoot yourself, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, or collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, took out pills but didn't swallow any, held a gun but changed your mind or it was grabbed from your hand, went to the roof but didn't jump, etc.</i> If yes, was this within the past 3 months?		High Risk



If YES to 2 or 3, seek behavioral healthcare for further evaluation.  
If the answer to 4, 5 or 6 is YES, get **immediate help: Call or text 988, call 911 or go to the emergency room.**  
**STAY WITH THEM** until they can be evaluated.



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# Results

- ▶ Depending on which question are answered yes or the total of the PHQ-9, a flow chart will be given to each provider, thus they know exactly who to contact next or which resource would be helpful in further management.
- ▶ From the guide providers can direct patients appropriately to social work, suicide prevention lines, emergency room, and various other resources depending on severity.
- ▶ The goal will be making sure that each patient can receive the care in a timely way to prevent any risk to their health or life. All while measuring the overall outcome of self-harm and suicide among TCHC patients.

# Limitations

- ▶ Just because there is a standard tool and guide in place it won't prevent every attempt of suicide. The goal is to decrease the numbers and have plans in place for patients who need care.
- ▶ Vermont has a limited pool of resources and providers to help in these resources. Creating partnerships and avenues with the UVM ED and Howard Center will lead to improved and efficient care for patients regarding their mental health.



# Future Adaptations

- ▶ Future projects could focus on improving the tool given to providers based on patient scores of the adapted suicide screening tool. The practice currently has their first adaptation in the works, but future adaptations providing new and different resources may be a good direction to improving its efficacy.
- ▶ The other future direction is implementing ways that TCHC practice could create partnerships with other mental health resources and organization within the Vermont community to allow patients access to a larger network for their care.

# References

- ▶ *2021 Intentional Self-Harm and Death by Suicide*. Vermont Department of Health. January 2021.  
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- ▶ Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale
- ▶ PHQ-9
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