

Absence of Response to Oregon's Adult Suicide Problem

Report from Physicians for Compassionate Care Education Foundation (www.pccef.org)

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Despite having suicide rates among the highest in the nation, the Oregon Health Authority has abandoned efforts to help despairing adults. It will, however, pay to help adults commit suicide.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Oregon had the 2nd highest suicide rate in the country for the years 1999-2010.¹

The November 2012 report by the Oregon Public Health Division documents Oregon's suicide problem²,

- In 2010, the suicide rate was of 17.1 per 100,000, (41% higher than the national average).
- The rate of suicide among Oregonians has been increasing since 2000.

The report's recommendations included:

1. Develop a new statewide suicide prevention strategy.
2. Complete statewide implementation of comprehensive suicide prevention in high schools.
3. Expand suicide intervention skills efforts that will have an impact on adults, particularly men and veterans throughout Oregon.

Suicide rates generally increase with age for men. For comparison, in Oregon the rate per 100,000 is 11.9 ages 15-19, 26.9 for ages 20-24, 46.7 for ages 75-79, and 62.3 for ages 80-84.

We inquired regarding the status of suicide prevention programs in Oregon. An email response to that request was received from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).³ They reported "staff resources to work on older adult suicide prevention have not been developed in OHA (the agency has two FTE working on Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention)." The reason given was a lack of financial resources.

So, Oregon has a high rate of suicides but no state resources for suicide prevention among older adults—who are at the highest risk!

We wonder whether the culture and acceptance of assisted suicide in Oregon — which in 1998 became the first state to get doctors officially in the suicide business — resulted in the Oregon government's absence of support for suicide prevention for older adults. Can there be programs to prevent suicide in a state that has legalized and even pays for assisted suicide? We call upon the Oregon legislature to provide financial resources to the OHA for suicide prevention for older adults.

¹ http://www.comedsoc.org/Suicide_-_Oregon_Ranked_2nd.htm?m=66&s=520

² <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/amh/CSAC%20Meeting%20Shedule/Suicide-in-Oregon-report.pdf>

³ Email received May 19, 2015 from Oregon Health Authority

