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Suicide and Sexual Orientation – an Overview

M. Plöderl¹

¹Suicide Prevention Research Program, Paracelsus Medical University, Salzburg, Austria

INTRODUCTION: Early studies showed an increased risk for suicide among non-heterosexual individuals, when compared to exclusively heterosexual individuals. Non-heterosexual individuals are often subsumed under the term "sexual minorities" and cover a wide range of subgroups, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning individuals, men who have sex with men (MSM) or women who have sex with women (MSM), or those who are not exclusively attracted to the other sex. Early results have been questioned for methodological reasons. In the last years, studies with high methodological quality and innovative prevention programs have been published.

METHOD: Review of the relevant literature.

RESULTS: Recent studies have confirmed previous findings of an increased risk for suicide among sexual minorities. Furthermore, explanatory models have been established that shed light on the underlying mechanisms. Innovative minority specific prevention programs are beginning to emerge. However, sexual minorities are still not adequately accounted for in suicide prevention.

DISCUSSION: Given the available data, sexual minorities should be acknowledged as a target group in suicide prevention.