

Self-extermination and professional training*Autoexterminio y formación profesional**Autoexterminio e formação profissional***Abstract**

During academic training, suicide acquires significant expression and medical students are more susceptible to suicidal ideation and suicide itself. In this sense, the objective was to reflect on suicide among undergraduate medical students in Brazil. This is a descriptive study, with a critical-reflexive nature and a qualitative approach, which aims to unravel the theory of generation Z through the students of the Graduate School of Medicine in Brazil who commit or carry out attempts at self-extermination. As a result, the disagreement between what is lived in a virtual environment and the real one generates conflicts between members of generation Z. The listening process, when done properly, helps to improve people's mental health and should be considered and encouraged in university environments. However, we are faced with the unpreparedness of society to deal with students who are more susceptible to suicidal ideation. It is important to train health professionals, as well as the development of educational lectures and the construction of psycho-emotional support centers in higher education institutions, in order to prevent the act of suicide to medical students in Brazil.

Descriptors: Suicide; Students Medical; Mental Health; Suicide Attempted; Brazil.

Resumén

Durante la formación académica, el suicidio adquiere una expresión significativa y los estudiantes de medicina son más susceptibles a la ideación suicida y al suicidio mismo. En ese sentido, el objetivo fue reflexionar sobre el suicidio entre estudiantes de pregrado en medicina en Brasil. Se trata de un estudio descriptivo, de carácter crítico-reflexivo y de abordaje cualitativo, que tiene como objetivo desentrañar la teoría de la generación Z a través de los estudiantes de la Escuela de Graduados en Medicina de Brasil que cometen o realizan tentativas de autoexterminio. Como resultado, el desacuerdo entre lo que se vive en un entorno virtual y el real genera conflictos entre los miembros de la generación Z. El proceso de escucha, cuando se realiza correctamente, ayuda a mejorar la salud mental de las personas y debe ser considerado y fomentado en los entornos universitarios. Sin embargo, nos enfrentamos a la falta de preparación de la sociedad para hacer frente a los estudiantes que son más susceptibles a la ideación suicida. Es importante la formación de profesionales de la salud, así como el desarrollo de charlas educativas y la construcción de centros de apoyo psicoemocional en las instituciones de enseñanza superior, con el fin de prevenir el acto suicida de los estudiantes de medicina en Brasil.

Descriptoros: Suicidio; Estudiantes de Medicina; Salud Mental; Intento de Suicidio; Brasil.

Resumo

Durante a formação académica o suicídio adquire significativa expressão e os estudantes de medicina estão mais susceptíveis a ideação suicida e ao próprio suicídio. Nesse sentido, objetivou-se refletir sobre o suicídio entre estudantes de Graduação de Medicina do Brasil. Trata-se de um estudo descritivo, de caráter crítico-reflexivo e abordagem qualitativa, que visa desvendar a teoria da geração Z através dos alunos da Graduação de Medicina do Brasil que cometem ou realizam tentativas de autoexterminio. Obteve como resultado que a discordância entre o que se vive em ambiente virtual e o real gera conflitos entre membros da geração Z. O processo de escuta, quando feito adequadamente, auxilia na melhoria da saúde mental das pessoas devendo ser considerado e estimulado nos ambientes universitários. Contudo, deparamos com o despreparo da sociedade para lidar com estudantes mais susceptíveis a ideação suicida. Torna-se importante a capacitação de profissionais da área da saúde, assim como o desenvolvimento de palestras educativas e a construção de centros de apoio psicoemocional nas instituições de ensino superior, afim de prevenir o ato de suicídio aos acadêmicos de medicina no Brasil.

Descritores: Suicídio; Estudantes de Medicina; Saúde Mental; Tentativa de Suicídio; Brasil.

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How to cite this article:

Monteiro LM, Vieira VMAM, Ferreira OBV, Paiva SF, Moreira TMB, Matos TM, Sousa EV, Paula TC, Monteiro GM, Justino GCM. Self-extermination and professional training. Glob Acad Nurs. 2022;3(Spe.2):e289.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.5935/2675-5602.20200289>

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Chief Editor: Caroliny dos Santos
Guimarães da Fonseca
Executive Editor: Kátia dos Santos
Armada de Oliveira
Responsible Editor: Rafael Rodrigues
Polakiewicz

Submission: 05-09-2022

Approval: 07-30-2022



Introduction

According to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) suicide is characterized as a public health problem. Despite not having a conclusive definition, suicide is marked by the desire to take one's own life as a mechanism for the cessation of suffering, and the desire for help. This phenomenon is determined by a multifactorial etiology, which can be of a psychosocial, biological, cultural and environmental nature¹⁻³.

At the present time, suicide is identified as the second leading cause of death in young people aged 15 to 29 of both sexes, with about 800,000 annual cases, equivalent to 1.4% of all deaths in the world. In this scenario, Brazil is recognized as the eighth country with the highest number of suicides in the world, with a rate of 6.5 cases per 100,000 inhabitants⁴.

However, data pointed out by the World Health Organization point out those nine out of ten cases of suicide could be prevented. According to this body, there are measures that can be taken with the population, the subpopulation and at individual levels to prevent suicide and its respective attempts. This discussion leads the individual to reflect on the subject, a fact that would be important for the sake of awareness, and to achieve progress aimed at prevention³.

According to the Centro de Valorização da Vida (CVV), suicide risks are directly or indirectly associated with moldable or non-mouldable scenarios, such as gender, low income, sexual orientation, history of family suicide, consumption of licit or illicit drugs, diagnosis of mental disorders, as well as factors related to academic daily life, such as sleep abdication and bullying. Among the methods commonly used for the suicide act are pesticide poisoning, consumption of high doses of medication, hanging and the use of firearms.

It is relevant to address that during academic training, suicide acquires significant expression, with numerous occurrences in different undergraduate courses. Since, upon entering a higher education course, the academic is subject to major changes in his/her routine, similar to the distance from the family nucleus and the insertion in a new environment where it is necessary to build new projects and take different initiatives^{1,3,5-7}.

In this aspect, medical students are more susceptible to suicidal ideation and suicide itself, since, in addition to the stressors common to all higher education courses, this student is also exposed to a large number of subjects and workload, frequent contact illness and even death, often leading him to seek escape strategies as a form of relief⁸.

In addition, several institutional and personal factors have the potential to worsen the mental health of these students. Among the factors cited in the literature are: the recurring academic pressure of competitiveness among students, the demands of professors, the limitation of time for study, the difficulty in reconciling leisure activities and the frequent exteriority of perfectionism and self-demand, these being , recurrent personality traits in many medical students⁹. These findings justify, therefore, the importance

of conducting research on suicide among medical students, since many acts can be preventable.

In this sense, the objective was to reflect on suicide among undergraduate medical students in Brazil.

Methodology

This is a descriptive study, with a critical-reflexive character and a qualitative approach, which aims to unravel the theory of generation Z through the students of the Graduate School of Medicine in Brazil who commit or carry out attempts at self-extermination, as well as to propose reflections and solutions for the the multiple problematic variables that affect this issue.

To prepare the theoretical framework, in April 2022, a search and selection of articles published in the last 05 years was carried out in the indexing bases: SciELO, MedLine, LILACS. The Descriptors in Health Sciences (DeCS) were used, their controlled synonyms and the Boolean operator AND, the search strategy being: "Suicide" AND "Students of Medicine" AND "Mental Health" AND "Suicide Attempt" AND "Brazil".

For a better understanding and critical explanation of the theme, three categories were elaborated, such as: The toxicity resulting from a generation, Hear more and talk less and Nobody is prepared.

Results and Discussion

The toxicity resulting from a generation

Analysis of the most recent data made by the Medical Demography study in Brazil, in the year 2020, showed that the number of doctors grew four times more than the Brazilian population in the last 50 years. This growth has brought some changes to the profile of the medical professional, pointing out that female independence has greatly influenced by showing the significant increase in women as doctors and the projection of overcoming the number of women, to men, in the coming years¹⁰.

However, another particularity of this professional class that is presented to us is the reduction in the age of those who enter the faculty of medicine. The same study points out that the number of students graduating from the medical course, up to 24 years old, in 2013, represented 28.7%, and in 2019, this share was already 36.3%. These individuals born after the year 2000, who had direct contact with the daily use of various technologies, have been named Generation Z¹⁰.

Generation Z, has this denomination in function of the characteristic of the individuals of this generation to show the habit of changing the television channels several times, this action being named neologism "zapping". Thus, he appropriated its first letter to name the aforementioned generation¹¹.

This generation formed in the midst of the speed of the Internet is multitasking; skilled with technologies; yearn for rapid career advancement; value working in socially responsible companies with a good working environment; crave flexible hours and casual clothing¹². A considerable part of this generation also supports individualism and sees differences as a way of being recognized, accepted and



valued. However, as they were born in the midst of social media, they do not worry, at first, if the achievements and concepts that make them unique are restricted to the virtual environment.

However, real life requires, at some point, that this young man who displays achievement and achievement in the virtual environment be confronted. In addition, the disagreement between what is lived in a virtual environment and the real one generates conflicts, due to the divergence between what appears to have and/or to be and what it really is. Every day the goal of this generation moves further away from reality through the use of filters, which distort the view of what is true, because through them it is possible to appear to have skin and body that one does not have.

Faced with the frustration of being confronted and not being able to maintain the illusion in the virtual world that many anxieties are fed. Faced with this and the fear of not being accepted, understood and heard that many remain silent, even experiencing conflicting intrinsic issues. They show fear in dialoguing about the anxieties and fears that the confrontations between the real and the virtual created.

Listen more and talk less

The listening process, when done properly, helps to improve people's mental health and should be considered and encouraged in university environments. Thus, attention is drawn to the need to build and/or improve reception centers for mental health demands within universities¹.

There is a need for qualified listening and the construction of relationships of trust and care during reception. Different authors have reiterated the importance of offering continuing education to professionals who work in these contexts to deal with situations that challenge representations about life and death, so that belief or judgment does not impose itself on practice¹³.

In situations of reception, availability, interested listening and consequent bonding between professionals and users, there is a feeling of appreciation and improvement in self-esteem. From this, people with suicidal behavior open themselves to the infinite possibilities of complex systems, feel more strengthened, protected and happy, believe that they are able to think of new paths and meanings for life, awaken to care for themselves and others, to the point of reducing thoughts of death and/or suicide attempts¹⁴.

Communication is such an important factor that Lima, quoting Fukumitsu & Scavacini, says that: "suicide is an act of communication that cannot be welcomed in life and which, consequently, concretely confirms the discontinuity of the meaning of life". The author also points out; referencing other authors, that effective communication is among the main protective factors in relation to suicide among adolescents.

Still in this context, identification and monitoring of university students with a history of suicide attempt should be prioritized within the university space, so that it directs the attention and conduct of professors, servers and other students, with a view to strengthening bonds and qualified listening. The academic support offered to the student,

through a tutoring program, for example, can be crucial in the reorganization of student and curricular activities, and can reduce the negative impact of academic pressure^{1,15}.

Nobody is prepared

Considering that environmental conditions interfere with suicidal behavior is an important point for the interpretation and intervention in the health and disease process. Today's society is directly dependent on social media, which establishes an eternal quest to satisfy its needs, often created by the media itself. The search for pleasure has always been inherent to man, but during the 21st century this pleasure was reallocated to social media and a growing satisfaction for "likes", which generates an impossible and untrue form of consumption, since people who use these networks only post what suits them, creating a false reality of what should be common for everyone. The influence of this search for the perfect image ends up affecting the lives of young people in different spheres, such as the increased demand for aesthetic procedures nowadays, depression, individual and collective dissatisfaction, and in more severe cases, suicide.¹⁶

By taking as a foundation such weaknesses of the population in question, we are faced with the unpreparedness of society to deal with students who are more susceptible to suicidal ideation. Authors claim that the higher education institution focuses its attention on the technical training of professors, directly or indirectly disregarding the mental health of academics. This posture, therefore, manifests itself as a barrier to the detection of emotional disorders and the prevention of the suicidal act. The author also emphasizes the involvement of academics in activities regarding the difficulties imposed during graduation as an important act to reduce the chances of developing psychic disorders¹⁷.

Authors highlight in their study the stressors associated with the exercise of medical education and practice, among them are: daily overload, sleep deprivation, intense and frequent contact with pain and suffering, contact with death, and uncertainties and limitations of medical knowledge. However, despite the large number of publications on the subject, and the notes on factors that motivate emotional disorders, little has been published on the intervention of assistance to this group¹⁷.

Another obstacle to the theme refers to the unpreparedness of society in general to act in the face of a patient with suicidal idealization. To emphasize the problem, authors state that health professionals in general have difficulty in identifying and dealing with suicidal patients. Consequently, the lack of preparation in the care of this public can trigger internal conflicts, generating, in addition to ineffectiveness in conduct and medical treatment, the mobilization of negative emotions in those who attend them, thus impairing the approach. In this aspect, the need for training in suicide has been defended, covering fundamental learning for suicide prevention in addition to care for susceptible patients¹⁸.

In this context, it is extremely important that educational institutions and the media know how to deal



with an extremely delicate subject and what are the best strategies for this approach, aiming at reducing suicide cases in medical schools in Brazil. It is presented as an educational intervention proposal, offering students teaching programs such as lectures with the objective of promoting an awareness to academics that the medical course can influence them and that adjacent factors such as alcohol, drugs, lack of sleep, among others can worsen their mental health conditions and place them as susceptible to self-extermination¹⁷.

It is also essential that medical faculties are concerned not only with the transmission of knowledge to students, but also with their mental health. It is essential to recognize the most vulnerable students, in order to work their difficulties and reduce the incidence of self-extermination. For this, it is up to the institution to provide a broad service of psychological assistance for academics, based on welcoming, it is worth noting that the service requires dissemination on the physical campus as well as through social networks, in order for students to have

knowledge of the support nucleus and to be able to avail up when needed¹⁹.

Conclusion

The descriptive study made it possible to evaluate the problematic variants that affect the acts and attempts of self-extermination. It is important to understand the characteristics inherent to generation Z as a way to avoid problems to which this audience is susceptible. In this aspect, listening focused on welcoming and respecting the particularities of fragile people is important to avoid damage to life. However, it was evidenced that society in general is not prepared to deal with patients who express the desire to commit suicide. It is important to train health professionals, as well as the development of educational lectures and the construction of psycho-emotional support centers in higher education institutions, in order to prevent the act of suicide among medical students in Brazil. A limitation of the study was the scarcity of publications that present suggestions for preventive measures inside and outside the educational institution to reduce self-extermination events.

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