

Professor Rory O'Connor

University of Glasgow

Thursday, 16th June 2022

Online



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Evidence-Based Psychological Treatment

When It Is Darkest: Understanding Suicide Risk

Introduction:

Suicide and self-harm are major public health concerns with complex aetiologies which encompass a multifaceted array of risk and protective factors. There is growing recognition that we need to move beyond psychiatric categories to further our understanding of the pathways to both. In this workshop, I'll help you make sense of this complexity as well as highlighting the evidence of what works to prevent suicide.

Content

In this workshop, I will draw from my book *When It Is Darkest: Why People Die by Suicide and What We Can Do To Prevent It* (Vermilion, 2021). My aim in the book is to get to the heart of this most tragic of human outcomes, challenging myths and misunderstandings as well as bringing together the personal and the professional. Suicide and self-harm are major public health concerns with complex aetiologies which encompass a multifaceted array of risk and protective factors. I will dispel some of the myths associated with suicide as well as describing the Integrated Motivational–Volitional (IMV) Model of Suicidal Behaviour (O'Connor & Kirtley, 2018). The IMV model outlines the pathways to the emergence of suicidal ideation and the transition from suicidal thoughts to acts of suicide. This tripartite model maps the relationship between background factors and trigger events, and the development of suicidal ideation/intent through to suicidal behaviour. Crucially, the IMV model identifies clinical targets for treatment. I will also highlight the psychological evidence of what works to prevent suicidal behaviour. In addition, I will outline some other ongoing work on suicide prevention research as well as illustrating the opportunities to mitigate the risk of the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on suicide risk. The wider clinical implications for the prevention of suicide will also be discussed.

Learning objectives:

- Will have an understanding of the myths surrounding suicide
- Will have knowledge of the Integrated Motivational-Volitional Model of Suicidal Behaviour



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- Will have an appreciation that the factors that lead to suicidal thoughts are different from those associated with suicidal acts
- Will have knowledge of the evidence for what psychological interventions are effective in reducing suicidal behaviour

Training modalities

The workshop will be interactive. Participants will be encouraged to discuss their own experiences.

Key references:

1. O'Connor, R. C. (2021). *When It Is Darkest: Why People Die by Suicide and What We Can Do to Prevent It*. Publisher: Vermilion
2. O'Connor, R. C., & Kirtley, O. J. (2018). The integrated motivational–volitional model of suicidal behaviour. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 373(1754), 20170268.

About the presenter:

Rory O'Connor PhD FAcSS is Professor of Health Psychology at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, President of the International Association for Suicide Prevention and a Past President of the International Academy of Suicide Research. Rory leads the Suicidal Behaviour Research Laboratory (**Web:** www.suicideresearch.info; **Twitter:** @suicideresearch) at Glasgow, one of the leading suicide/self-harm research groups internationally. He has published extensively in the field of suicide and self-harm, specifically concerning the psychological processes which precipitate suicidal behaviour and self-harm. He is also co-author/editor of several books and is author of *When It is Darkest. Why People Die by Suicide and What We Can Do To Prevent It* (2021). He is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Archives of Suicide Research* and Associate Editor of *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. Rory acts as an advisor to a range of national and international organisations including national governments on the areas of suicide and self-harm.

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All workshops, unless otherwise indicated are intended for a cross/mixed ability audience, and are delivered online



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