



VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

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SUICIDE RATE INCREASING



You don't need to look too far to read about EMS and other Medical Transportation provider suicides. Suicide is the third leading killer of 15 to 24 year olds and the 11th largest overall killer of Americans. According to a report from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health cited in *Scientific American Mind*, the suicide rate in our country is increasing for the first time in over a decade. The increase is primarily in whites 40 to 64. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, started in 2005, received 57,625 calls in August, 2009, an increase of 10,434 over the same month in 2008.

We've all read in the popular press that a family history of suicide increases your risk. It does so by 2.5 times. People with eating disorders are 23 times more likely to die by suicide than "normal" eaters. The presence of an eating disorder is a better predictor of suicide than depression. Surprisingly, there may be relationships between suicide and chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes.

Victims of childhood physical and violent sexual abuse are at risk because the habituation to pain may change their brains through what's called "epi-genetic" effects on the DNA in brain cells. About half the offspring of people with major depression demonstrate a 28% thinning of the right cerebral cortex. This can be seen in children as young as six. It is not known whether this thinning is the result of heredity or environment. A person with this cortical abnormality has about an 80% likelihood of developing depression.

Suicide is the result of combining the motivation to die with the daring to act. Where there's a will there's a way. Our professional responsibilities for dealing with suicide attempts are detailed in clinical protocol. How can we identify co-workers and others in our lives with the will to attempt suicide before they come up with the way? In 2006, the American Association of Suicidology published a list of warning signs that can be expressed by the acronym **IS PATH WARM?**

- I** Ideation/ threatened or communicated
- S** Substance Abuse/ excessive or increased
- P** Purposelessness/no reasons for living
- A** Anxiety/Agitation/Insomnia
- T** Trapped/ feeling no way out
- H** Hopelessness
- W** Withdrawal from friends, family, society
- A** Anger (uncontrolled)/ rage/ seeking revenge
- R** Recklessness/ risky acts unthinking
- M** Mood changes (dramatic)

Do you know what to do if a friend or loved one shows these signs? Do you know what mental health resources are available in your community? Does it do anybody any good if you care enough to be aware, but don't know what to do?



Sign Up for The **EVOC - "T3" Train-the-Trainer Course**
August 25-27 in Iowa, or September 22-24 in California

American Integrated Training Systems, Inc. (AITS) is conducting an EVOC Train the Trainer course in conjunction with the Delaware TWP Fire Department, August 25-27 in Des Moines, Iowa, and with San Diego Medical Service in San Diego, California on September 22-24. The course will qualify instructors to present the classroom portion of the training and provide an orientation to the practical driving exercises. Each participant will act as a student and coach for ambulance driving exercises. Cost is \$575 and registration closes August 20. For more information please contact Billy Rutherford at 703-440-0914 or brutherf@aitstraining.com.



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