

Key Messages for Media Spokesperson

For use when fielding media inquiries:

Suicide and Mental Illness

- Suicide is one of our nation's leading, yet preventable, causes of death.
- Among the top ten leading causes of death in our nation, suicide continues to be on the rise; we must invest in research and prevention at a level commensurate with suicide's toll on our nation.
- The risk of suicide increases when several health factors and life stressors converge at the same time in a person's life.
- Multiple risk factors and protective factors interact in a dynamic way over time, affecting a person's risk for suicide; this means there are ways to decrease a person's risk, once you learn which modifiable risk factors are pertinent in a particular person's life (eg, getting depression treated and well managed; limiting use of alcohol, particularly during times of crisis; developing healthy boundaries in relationships; limiting exposure to toxic people; developing healthy self-expectations and accepting imperfection as a part of life).
- We are learning how to connect the dots and notice warning signs, to detect when people are at increased risk. Suicide is preventable.
- Depression and other mental health problems are the leading risk factors for suicide. More than 90% of people who die by suicide have an underlying mental health condition such as depression.
- Mental health can be treated and optimized like any other aspect of health. Depression is among the most treatable of all mood disorders; more than three-fourths of people with depression respond positively to treatment.
- The best way to prevent suicide is through early detection, diagnosis, and vigorous treatment of depression and other mental health conditions, including substance use problems.
- Physicians are more likely to die from suicide than people of many other professions.

Reprinted with permission from [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Physician Residency/Fellowship Programs](#) developed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Mayo Clinic.

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