

## **SUICIDE RISK ASSESSMENT IN OLDER ADULTS**

### **Risk Factors:**

1. Older Age
2. Male
3. White
4. Unmarried
5. Widowed
6. Live Alone
7. Divorced
8. Psychiatric disorder (depression, substance abuse or schizophrenia are present in 90% of suicides)
9. Physical illness (cancer, COPD, prostatic disease, dementia)
10. Somatization (constantly thinking that something is physically wrong)
11. First episode of depression
12. Early dementia
13. Alcohol
14. Rigid and emotionally restricted personality traits (low openness to new experiences)
15. Obsessional and anxious traits
16. Hopelessness (a lack of belief in future positive outcomes)

## Risk Assessment Questionnaire

In 70% of suicides, the individual saw a health care professional within the previous month. Older adults also have a stronger suicide intent, but are less likely to communicate it.

<b>Have you ever felt that life is not worth living?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Have you ever thought of hurting or harming yourself?</b> <i>(if answer is NO, do not proceed with questioning)</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Have you considered specific methods for harming yourself?</b> <i>(if a method has been considered, and the method is readily available, the greater the risk)</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Have you ever made a specific suicide attempt?</b> <i>(the more severe the attempt, or the more specific the plan, the greater the risk)</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

### Suicide Myths

- If clients are determined to kill themselves, no one can stop them
- Clients who commit suicide do not seek help before their attempt
- If clients kill themselves, they must be crazy
- Asking clients about suicide can lead to suicide
- Clients who talk about suicide rarely do it
- A failed suicide attempt should be treated as manipulative behaviour