

Suicidal ideation among New Mexico middle school students: Role of substance abuse and resiliency

Background

- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among 10-14 year olds nationally (CDC WONDER)
- Pre-teen alcohol use initiation associated with ideation and attempt in high school students (Sawhn, J Adolescent Health 2009)
- Initiation of substance use during middle school associated with ideation and suicide attempt (Dunn, J School Health 2008)
- However, few studies examine the role of substance use and resiliency on suicidal ideation among middle school students

Methods

- We explored the association between suicidal ideation, substance use, and resiliency factors among New Mexico middle school students using 2013 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, a representative sample of students in grades 6 – 8
- We defined suicidal ideation as any student who ever seriously considered suicide and/or ever made a suicide plan
- Substance abuse included alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, inhalants, and other drug use (defined as use of any or all of the following: synthetic marijuana, cocaine, prescription drugs without a prescription, painkillers to get high, or injecting any drug)
- Resiliency factors included: having a caring friend, having a caring adult, parent interested in school, clear rules as school parents knows where I am, and involved in community activities
- Used logistic regression to test association between suicidal ideation, substance use, and resiliency factors and interaction between substance use and resiliency factors

Results

- Prevalence of suicidal ideation:
 - 22.8% [95%CI: 21.3-24.4] among middle school students
 - Highest among 8th grade students (28.2% [95%CI:26.1-30.5])
 - Higher among girls (30.1%[95%CI:27.7-32.5]) than boys (16.0%[95%CI: 14.6-17.6])
 - Higher among students reporting substance use
 - Higher among students for whom resiliency factors not present
- Among girls, having a caring friend protective in the absence of other drug use
- Among boys, having a caring friend protective regardless of any substance use

Discussion and Implications

- Prevention efforts should target middle school students
- Address the role of substance abuse in suicidal ideation and mental health issues
- Focus on social support and connectedness

Contact Information

Naomi Greene
New Mexico Department of Health
Naomi.Greene@state.nm.us

