Contents

Message From the president 2
Presentation of the Morselli Award winners 3
Information on the upcoming Miami Conference 4
Support the Academy 5
Update on archives of suicide research 6
James Kirk Bernard Foundation Award for 7
Excellence in the Biological Exploration of Suicidality
The Expert Corner 8-9
Recent studies on the ASR 10-11
Message from the president

Dear colleagues,

the IASR Newsletter appears to have been issued at highly irregular intervals over past years. The board has decided to improve this state of affairs and with the help our newly appointed editor Dr. Yossi Levi-Belz (Associate Professor and Chair of the Behavioral Sciences department at the Ruppin Academic Center in Israel). Here is a brand new issue with an update from the board on recent activities and developments.

We are just a couple of months away from the upcoming biennial IASR/AFSP Suicide Summit in Miami, Florida. The board and the congress organizing committee have been busily planning the activities that will take place during the conference days, and the development of the scientific program has been ably chaired by Dr. Cheryl King and Erkki Isometsä aiming at embracing all aspects of contemporary and innovative suicide research. We are excited about a record setting year as the 2019 Summit has seen a large increase in competitive submissions for the event! We are very proud of the scientific content for this year’s Summit and hope you will find it invigorating. And we believe you will appreciate the beautiful venue with its location directly on the beach in Miami! See more information on our website and in this Newsletter.

Speaking of conferences, the board and our close partners in the AFSP are planning ahead for the 2021 meeting. We will announce the details later, but we can already tell you that this conference will take place in Europe for the first time in many years and most likely in the end of October.

The Archives of Suicide Research continues to grow as an influential scientific journal in our field, under the extremely competent leadership of Editor-in-chief Barbara Stanley and Co-Editor Rory O’Connor. We know that many of you are actively supporting the ASR through editorial and reviewer work and would like to express our appreciation to you for these important contributions. The board is currently exploring how we may get more out of our agreement with the publishing house we are using (T&F) to increase the visibility of both our journal and our academy and to improve the financial terms under which we are operating. We are happy to announce that next year the journal will appear in a new and cutting-edge graphical design! Recently, Dr. Katalin Szanto. M.D. joined the IASR board as a new Secretary-treasurer. You will find a separate statement from Kati in this newsletter but let me already say that she has contributed a lot to revising and improving systems for member recruitment, collecting of membership fees and communication through the web and other channels. We are happy to still receive clerical support from the multitalented Julie Poupart, with whom you may already have exchanged email messages. Please contact Kati, Julie or me if you have any questions or concerns.

And finally, we promise to do a better job in the future in communicating with you – our members. Should you have a wish to send us pieces of information or communications, please feel free to be creative and use the newsletter! I hope to see you in Miami!

Lars Mehlum MD, PhD

President: Prof. Lars Mehlum
President-Elect: Prof. Gil Zalsman
Past-President: Prof. Maria Oquendo

Secretary Treasure: Prof. Katalin Szanto
Newsletter editor: Prof. Yossi Levi-Belz
Yeates Conwell, M.D.

Yeates Conwell, M.D. received his medical training at the University of Cincinnati and completed his Psychiatry Residency and a Fellowship in Geriatric Psychiatry at Yale. He joined the faculty of the University of Rochester School of Medicine in 1985 where he is now Professor and Vice Chair of Psychiatry. He is Academic Chief of the Geriatric Psychiatry Program, Director of the UR Office for Aging, and Co-Director of the UR Center for the Study and Prevention of Suicide. In addition to teaching, clinical care, and service system development, Dr. Conwell directs an inter-disciplinary program of research with a focus on suicide prevention in later life. With over 300 peer-reviewed publications and 30 years of continuous NIH funding, he has helped develop the body of knowledge concerning determinants of risk for suicide in older adulthood and the role that can be played by community-based services and supports in mitigating that risk.

Robert (Bob) Goldney

Robert (Bob) Goldney is Emeritus Professor, having retired as Head of the Discipline of Psychiatry at the University of Adelaide in South Australia. He has over 400 publications, with the majority addressing suicidal behavior. The first of these in 1975 was on the lack of follow-up of those who had attempted suicide, a continuing issue. His Doctoral thesis was on correlates of lethality in young suicide attempters, and over the last five decades he has researched a broad range of issues associated with suicidal behavior. His book 'Suicide prevention' is to be published this year, and this 3rd Edition is co-authored with Prof Nav Kapur. He was a founding member of both Suicide Prevention Australia and the advisory committee which established Australia’s first suicide prevention strategy.

He has received a number of awards for his work, including the Stengel research award of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, the Louis Dublin Award for lifetime achievements in suicide prevention from the American Association of Suicidology, and a similar Lifetime Research Award of Suicide Prevention Australia. He is a past President of both the International Association of Suicide Prevention and the International Academy for Suicide Research and was a founding member of the Academy.
Information on the upcoming Miami Conference

We look forward to seeing you in South Beach Miami October 27th – 30th for the 2019 Summit! We are excited about the amazingly strong scientific program, which is a direct result of this record setting year for competitive scientific submissions. We received 42 symposiums and 340 individual submissions!

From the conference welcome Sunday afternoon through the final symposia Wednesday, the conference will offer impactful keynote talks addressing pressing issues in suicide research, a wide array of cutting edge scientific symposia and presentations to choose from, and engaging poster sessions. In addition, the Summit will feature its highly popular Early Career Research Mentor Program. Perhaps most importantly, the Summit will enable us to immerse ourselves in new scientific knowledge and engaging discussions concerning the challenges of suicide-related research, the new methodologies becoming available to us, and the pressing unanswered questions in our field. We will have many opportunities to connect with, learn from, and plan future collaborations with each other!

Summit plenary talks will feature Gustavo Turecki and Virginia Willour (Genetics); Erkki Isometsä (Suicide in Mood Disorders: Temporal Variation in Risk); Amy Bohnert, Guilherme Borges, Mary Coleman (Opioids, Substance Abuse, and Suicide); Fabrice Jollant and Alexandre Dombrovski (Brain Function, Behavior, and Decision Making), and Joshua Gordon, NIMH Director (Progress and Promise in Suicide Prevention Research). Invited symposia span the topics of suicide survivorship, psychoses, the biology of suicide, real-time risk assessment, big data (including electronic health record and social media), psychological and physical pain, suicide risk screening and assessment, register-based studies of suicide, targeted interventions for adolescents, and implementation science.

Finally, October is a wonderful time to enjoy SoBe (as South Beach is nicknamed) -- ocean, sand, sun, and lots of fascinating people! We hope to see you in Miami

For more information and registration https://suicideresearchsummit.org/

The International Summit on Suicide Research welcomes sponsors and exhibitors at the conference. If you are interested in supporting us, please email us at info@SuicideResearchSummit.org for more information.

Click to view our Corporate Support Brochure.
Katalin Szanto, M.D. Secretary Treasurer

I am honored to be elected to the Secretary-Treasurer of IASR as of January of 2019. I am passionate about suicide prevention and research that may identify potentially modifiable suicide risk factors. I have been a member of IASR for the past 26 years, beginning when I was a young psychiatrist working at the Crisis Intervention Center in Budapest, Hungary. Even though IASR has always aimed to fill a critical gap connecting researchers across the globe whose work focus on suicide, for years it was not obvious whether the organization would be viable. I feel that the turning point came with the high-quality journal published under the leadership of Barbara Stanley as Editor-in-Chief, and successful conferences held in Montreal, New York, and Las Vegas which attracted quality research and large crowds. As a secretary-treasurer my aim is to facilitate the organization’s utility within the research community, by furthering potential collaborations, establishing working groups of researchers with similar interests, and trying to attract researchers from other fields, such as behavioral economists and neuroscientists, to attend the IASR/AFSP conferences.

The organization is still small, with about 125 regular members and 30 junior members. Unfortunately, not every regular member pays membership fee on a yearly basis, indicating that commitment to the organization still wavers in some members. Show your support to the Academy by paying membership fee and by attending our conferences. IASR is reliant on your membership dues to maintain the Journal and to run our organization. Moreover, I believe it is crucial to IASR’s aims that we expand membership. Please, think of colleagues and friends who you think could be great additions and encourage them to apply. For membership criteria please visit our webpage: www.suicide-research.org/membership. Please share with me your ideas how to make IASR more useful. You can contact me via e-mail at: secretary@suicide-research.org
Much is new at ASR. We are thrilled that Rory O’Connor, PhD of the University of Glasgow has joined me as co-editor in chief. I requested adding a co-editor and the Executive Committee agreed, in order to better represent the international character of IASR. We are now in the process of considering nominees for associate editorships. Please let us know if you have nominees to suggest.

Additionally, the format of the journal will be revamped beginning with the first issue of 2020. It the first time that the journal has had a major overhaul and we are very excited about the contemporary, up-to-date format. The cover, layout and instructions to authors are all being updated. We will continue to accept timely literature reviews. Given the limitation on the number of pages our publisher allows, we are now encouraging brief reports. Be on the lookout for the new journal format in early 2020.

Finally, we are continually working to improve the time it takes to review manuscripts. We have moved to making more editorial decisions prior to sending manuscripts to reviewers. But the rate limiting step for quick decisions is getting reviews done. We are always looking for new reviewers and suggestions about how to improve the review process. We are planning on holding a “Meet the Editors” session at IASR and hope to hear from you then.

Barbara Stanley, PhD

For more information about the Archives of Suicide Research: https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/usui20/current
Brief note on the new James Kirk Bernard Foundation Award for Excellence in the Biological Exploration of Suicidality

The James K. Bernard Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 2010 focused on suicide prevention through scientific research, education and awareness. The JKBF Award for Excellence in the Biological Exploration of Suicide is awarded this year for the first time during the IASR/AFSP conference in recognition of an early career investigator whose research helps identify biological risk factors and pathways. A committee of three experts, Prof. Maria Oquendo from the US, Prof. Van Heeringen from Belgium and Prof. Gil Zalsman from Israel selected 3 finalist abstracts from among early career researchers’ abstracts submitted to the 2019 IASR/ASFP conference, based on innovation and originality. The final winning researcher was selected and approved by the JKBF board and a prize of a 5000 USD will be awarded by Ms Liz Bell, Executive Director of the JKBF and Prof. Zalsman, chair of the committee in a ceremony in Miami.

The winner of this year’s award is Dr. Arthur Ryan, an early career researcher whose work focused on modifiable biological risk factors in an exploration of lipid profiles within the military population conducted through a cross-institutional collaboration. Congratulations to Arthur.
"The Expert Corner"
Conversations with experts and pioneers in suicide research

Interviewing: Dr. Yossi Levi-Belz

Prof. Alan Apter, M.D. senior physician and former director of the Department of Psychological Medicine Schneider Children’s Medical Center in Israel. He is one of the leading child psychiatrists in Israel and the leader of suicide prevention and research in Israel. He is one of the founders of the Lior Tsfaty center for suicide and mental pain studies at Ruppin Academic Center in Israel. He published more than 500 papers and chapters on suicide prevention and several book on this topic. The last book of his was "Illuminating the Mountains of Darkness Suicidal behavior and suicide prevention among adolescents."

Prof. Apter received the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) reward in recognition of his breakthrough studies in the field of suicide. He was also the recipient of an award from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) for his significant contribution to pediatric mental health and his activities concerning depression and suicidal behavior in children and adolescents, and received the Lifetime Achievement Award by the European Society for the Study of Tourette Syndrome (ESSTS).
When did you start to be interested in suicide research and why?

While serving in the military I was struck by the terrible impact of the suicides of young people on their comrades and families. Each suicide was accompanied by an intensive action aimed both at trying to figure out what had happened and to soften the effect of the tragedy. I subsequently published this story under the title “Death without warning”. On finishing my service, I then directed a psychiatric adolescent unit where suicidal behaviors were rife and presented a formidable clinical challenge. I had the opportunity to seek advice from Herman van Praag then director of psychiatry at the Hebrew University and he set me on my involvement on suicide prevention.

Who were your key influences and why was he such an influence?

My key influences were many including Sam Tyano from Geha Hospital in Israel; Donald Cohen and Jim Leckman from Yale who gave me the support for my early work in the IDF; Danuta Wasserman who involved me in major European studies including WHO Euro and in educational projects within the framework of the Karolinska Institute and more recently in SEYLE project looking at suicide prevention in Youth. David Shaffer, John Mann and Christina Hoven from Columbia were as also inspiring and introduced me to many innovative ideas in suicide research. A major influence on me has always been David Brent with whom I had and still have some wonderful collaborations, his ideas continue to be a major source of inspiration for me.

What are the main challenges that you encounter in suicide research and have you found solutions to those challenges?

The most fascinating but most frustrating aspects of studying suicide is the myriad variety of epistemological avenues to approach the topic from hermeneutical and literary insights to the most complex biological systems and mathematical algorithms.

If you need to choose only one, what is your proudest accomplishment when it comes to your mental health work?

Israel’s national suicide prevention effort is now both well established and (almost) adequately funded. The son of a colleague killed himself during his military service. Together with this colleague and his wife, we were the first to influence our government to establish that effort which is now well underway.

Reflecting on your career so far, is there a study that you think “I really wish I had done that”?

Keith Hawton’s study on blister packs for paracetamol tablets.

Thinking more generally about the field, what do you think has been the most important advance made in the last 20 years?

The understanding that medication for depression in adolescents can really lower suicide rates.

Where would you like to see the research focus in the next 10 years?

Integration of all the different fields of suicide research into one comprehensive theoretical system.

Is there a key paper you think anybody getting into the field of suicide research should read?

Defiantly Karl Meninger’s short book (1933), “man against himself“.
Recent studies investigating suicide and suicidal behavior in the *Archives of suicide research* journal

“These Things Don’t Work.” Young People’s Views on Harm Minimization Strategies as a Proxy for Self-Harm: A Mixed Methods Approach
Ruth Wadman, Emma Nielsen, Linda O’Raw, Katherine Brown, A. Jess Williams, Kapil Sayal & Ellen Townsend

Published online: 19 Jul 2019

**Abstract**

Although UK clinical guidelines make tentative recommendations for “harm minimization” strategies for repeated self-harm, this is in the absence of empirical evidence supporting their acceptability or effectiveness. We explore young people’s views of harm minimization strategies (e.g., snapping elastic bands on skin, drawing on skin with red ink), as a proxy for self-harm. In this mixed methods study we examine data (secondary analysis) from: (1) an online questionnaire (*N* = 758) observing the frequency of these strategies being used as a form of self-harm, and as a form of alternative coping (viewed as distinct from self-harming), and (2) semi-structured interviews (*N* = 45), using thematic analysis to identify themes related to harm minimization. Predominant themes suggest that many young people viewed harm minimization strategies as a proxy for self-harm as ineffective. Where such strategies were reported as helpful, their utility was reported to be short-lived or situation-specific. Findings from both studies indicate that some young people described using harm minimization (e.g., elastic band snapping) as a form of self-harm (e.g., to break the skin). Harm minimization strategies should not be recommended in isolation and their use must be monitored. Further research is urgently needed to develop an evidence base that informs practice.

Community Based Support for People at Risk for Suicide and Those Who Care for them – Areas for Improvement
Laura Finlayson-Short, Sarah Hetrick, Karolina Krysinska, Meredith Harris, Caroline Salom, Nina Stefanac, Eleanor Bailey & Jo Robinson

Published online: 03 Jul 2019

**Abstract**

To systematically review the quality of evidence regarding the effectiveness of supports for people affected by suicide. EMBASE, MEDLINE, and PsychINFO were searched for evaluations of community-based supports for people affected by suicide. Outcomes included suicide-related behavior, depression, grief, quality of life, caring ability, and qualitative experiences. Fifteen studies evaluated 15 supports of various modalities. Study quality was generally poor; most studies examined bereaved individuals with mixed findings. Few reduced suicide-related behavior, half improved depression, and grief, while studies of caring ability, quality of life, or qualitative experiences reported positive effects. Supports associated with better outcomes connected peers with similar experiences, were provided over a period of months, and involved veteran rather than novice facilitators. Supports for people affected by suicide may be effective for improving suicide-related behavior, psychological adjustment, quality of life and caregiving, but require further evaluation.
Using Machine Learning to Identify Suicide Risk: A Classification Tree Approach to Prospectively Identify Adolescent Suicide Attempters
Ryan M. Hill, Benjamin Oosterhoff & Calvin Do

Published online: 10 Jun 2019

Abstract
This study applies classification tree analysis to prospectively identify suicide attempters among a large adolescent community sample, to demonstrate the strengths and limitations of this approach for risk identification. Data were drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health. Youth (n = 4,834, M_age = 16.15, SD = 1.63, 52.3% female, 63.7% White) completed at-home interviews at Wave 1 and a measure of suicide attempts 12 months later, at Wave 2. Results indicated two classification tree solutions that maximized risk prediction, with 69.8%/85.7% sensitivity/specificity and 90.6%/70.9% sensitivity/specificity, respectively. Classification trees provide a technique for identification of individuals at-risk for suicide attempts. Classification trees produce easy-to-implement decision rules and tailored screening approaches that can be adapted to the goals of a particular organization.

Feasibility and Acceptability of the Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) Intervention in US Adolescents
Janet C. Lindow, Jennifer L. Hughes, Charles South, Luis Gutierrez, Elizabeth Bannister, Madhukar H. Trivedi & Matthew J. Byerly

Published online: 04 Jul 2019

Abstract
Suicide is the second leading cause of death among US adolescents, and rates of suicide among youth have been increasing for the past decade. This study assessed the feasibility and acceptability of the universal, school-based Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) program, a promising mental health promotion and suicide primary prevention intervention, in US youth. Using an uncontrolled design, the feasibility and acceptability of delivering and studying YAM were assessed in Montana and Texas schools. Thirteen of 16 (81.3%) schools agreed to support YAM delivery, and five Montana and 6 Texas schools were included in analyses. Facilitators delivered YAM in 78 classes (1,878 students) as regular high school curriculum. Of the total number of students who received YAM, 519 (27.6%) provided parental consent and assent. 436 (84.0%) consented students participated in pre- and post-surveys. Students, parents, and school staff found YAM highly acceptable based on satisfaction surveys. In summary, this study found YAM feasible to implement in US schools. Results also suggest students, parents, and school staff supported school-based programs and were highly satisfied with the YAM program. A randomized controlled trial is warranted to test the efficacy of YAM in promoting mental health and preventing suicidal thoughts and behaviors in US adolescents.
Thank you for reading!
For more information about IASR please visit: https://suicide-research.org/

See you in our next newsletter!