



TITLE: An Examination of the Potential Impact of COVID-19 on Depression and Suicide Risk in Older Adults

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and deaths continue to skyrocket across the world, leaving a trail of enduring psychological turmoil. It wreaks havoc on the physical, emotional, and cognitive health of those directly infected, as well as caretakers, friends, and families. Though the pandemic has at least indirectly impacted most people, older adults appear to be the most vulnerable to COVID-19-related deaths and little is known about the pandemic-related psychological consequences. Unfortunately, many of the precautions taken to minimize infections may have inadvertent negative consequences among older adults. Most recently, researchers have highlighted the need to focus both on preventing the illness and preventing the potential deleterious psychological sequelae of trying to survive a pandemic. In this presentation, past pandemics are examined to hypothesize the likely long-term effects that COVID-19 may have on depression and suicide risk in older adults and to provide guidance on strategies to mitigate the potential negative outcomes.

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Mode of Presentation: Oral

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Dr. Josephine Ridley received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from West Virginia University. She is the Assistant Chief of Psychology at the VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System and Adjunct Associate Professor at Case Western Reserve University. She conducts research and has published in the areas of suicide and depression and is a Master Trainer for the Zero Suicide Institute's Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk Workshop.

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Stephanie Gomez is a graduate student at Case Western Reserve University pursuing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. She obtained her B.S. in Psychology from Northeastern University in 2017 and her M.A in Clinical Psychology from Case Western in 2021. Her research interests are broadly in suicide risk and prevention in adults. More specifically, Stephanie is interested in examining how suicidal thoughts turn into suicidal actions and the psychological factors that influence this pathway.



Silvia Hernandez is a clinical psychology intern at the Cincinnati Veteran's Affairs Medical Center in Ohio, USA. Her research focuses on understanding how people experience suicidality, particularly suicidal thinking and its relationship to suicide-related behaviors. Clinically, she is interested in the use and evaluation of specific interventions aimed at reducing suicide risk. Her current research aims to examine the relationships between healthy psychosocial development and severity of suicidal ideation in Veterans experiencing depression. Findings may shed light on ways to tailor intervention targets based on the individual's psychosocial needs that may be related to their suffering.

