



Training the community to recognise and respond to suicidality

Why include this strategy in LifeSpan?

Gatekeepers are individuals most likely to come into contact with people at risk of suicide and who are therefore in the best position to intervene. “Gatekeeper training” aims to equip these people with the skills to identify, recognise and respond to those at risk and assist them to seek appropriate help.

Gatekeeper training has been recommended by the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the existing academic literature as one of the most promising strategies for preventing suicide^{1,2}. Although there is little direct evidence that gatekeeper training can lead to decreases in suicidal behaviour, evidence shows that gatekeeper training can increase awareness of suicide risk factors, and improve suicide prevention skills, suicide knowledge, and attitudes towards people with suicidal thoughts and behaviours³⁻⁸.

Evidence supporting recommended interventions in LifeSpan

LifeSpan has endorsed “Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)” as the key gatekeeper training program. QPR is one of the most commonly used commercially available gatekeeper training programs. It has been found to have positive effects in a wide variety of populations such as school staff⁹, university students and staff¹⁰, youth workers¹¹ and non-clinical hospital staff¹². QPR can be delivered either online (takes approximately 60 minutes) or in a face-to-face format (approximately 2-3 hours). Results across the different formats are comparable in terms of increasing knowledge about suicide and suicide prevention, self-efficacy for suicide prevention, and behavioural intentions to engage in suicide prevention⁶. From a feasibility perspective, QPR online provides an opportunity to deliver training to a wide range of community members in a highly cost-effective manner.

What is happening in LifeSpan NSW trial sites?

Black Dog Institute has established a partnership with the QPR Institute to adapt QPR online for an Australian context and make it available to LifeSpan sites at a reduced cost. LifeSpan is also endorsing LivingWorks’ Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). ASIST is delivered over a two-day face-to-face workshop. Studies on ASIST have shown increases in knowledge about suicide, gatekeeper preparedness and self-efficacy in providing help, number of at-risk youth referred, and frequency of asking about distress/suicide¹³⁻¹⁵.

How will this be evaluated in LifeSpan?

The effectiveness of gatekeeper training is being evaluated as part of the LifeSpan Suicide Prevention Training Study. Surveys will be distributed pre-training, post-training and at six-month follow up. The surveys will examine knowledge of suicide, attitudes towards suicide and help-seeking, confidence in helping, and actual helping behaviours.



Key References

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For more detailed information on the evidence underpinning LifeSpan and the NSW research trial visit
www.lifespan.org.au

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