

The aim of this *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* special issue is to present prevalence figures and risk factors of suicidal behaviour, as well as to introduce potential suicide prevention models in circumpolar areas; this issue contains eight articles on these topics from various circumpolar populations.

As in several other indigenous groups throughout the world (c.f., ref 1), high rates of suicides among adolescents and young people have become an issue of public health importance also in the Arctic areas. From a historical perspective, this is a relative new phenomenon given that in traditional times, suicides among Aboriginal peoples e.g. in North America were rare (c.f., 2, 3). In the past, the few suicides occurring took place only among the aged or sick as an act of self-sacrifice for the benefit of the family (e.g., times of famine). At those times, suicides were almost unknown among youth.

In this *IJCH* special issue, the prevalence figures of suicides/suicidal behaviour are presented from different geographical areas of the Arctic and among different indigenous groups. Also, one particular article was chosen to this special issue to give an example of research regarding a certain suicide method.

In his article (4), Näyhä analysed the regional patterns and temporal trend of suicides in Finnish Lapland by using data obtained from Statistics Finland during the period 1961-2005. Male suicides were found to be more common in Lapland compared with the national level. Suicides were also concentrated to a certain area. In the two

Norwegian articles (1,5) prevalence and attempts of suicide, as well as self-mutilation were reported among indigenous Sami living in North Norway. In a register-based follow-up study regarding the time period 1970-1988, an increased suicide mortality was found among Sami compared to the reference population (5). On the other hand, in two different Norwegian databases, no significant increase in the prevalence of suicide attempts among Sami adolescents was found when compared with non-Sami peers (1,5).

In the article by Perkins and colleagues (6), Alaska Natives were found to have a three times higher suicide rate when compared with the non-Native population. Another focus of this article was to conduct follow-back interviews with key informants for selected cases in order to obtain new information regarding risk and protective factors of suicides. Of note is that one of the greatest successes of this research was the unanimous positive effect of the follow-back interview on the interviewees, all of who were grateful to be able to talk with someone about the different matters of their loved one's life.

One focus of this *IJCH* special issue is on methodology for examining/monitoring suicidal behaviour in the Arctic areas. In the article by Allen and colleagues a community-level methodological approach to examine outcomes of community-based circumpolar suicide prevention programs is described (7). In this article the authors demonstrates the feasibility and potential utility of one particular community level methodology to assess the outcomes of suicide prevention program that

targeted suicide and substance abuse among Yup'ik youth living in a remote community in rural Alaska.

The impact of historical (e.g., historical legacy of colonization including forced removal from traditional lands, and histories of the residential school and welfare systems) and lifetime trauma on suicide prevention among Aboriginal young people is being reviewed and discussed in Canadian articles (2,3). Independent predictors of suicide attempts were identified in the Cedar Project (2), and participatory, collaborative suicide prevention model involving both Indigenous communities and multifaceted societal actors are called for in order to be successful in suicide prevention (2,3).

Finally, as an example of research in suicide methodology, Hernetkoski and colleagues have gathered information on fatal motor vehicle accidents in Finland (8). The main focus of their study was to examine the prevalence of driver suicides during years 1974-2006, and to find out whether there were differences between Northern and Southern Finland either in the amount of these cases or background factors of these drivers.

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