
Suicide Kills One Person Every 40 Seconds, Says WHO

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LONDON: Across the world, one person takes their own life every 40 seconds, and more people die by suicide every year than in war, the World Health Organization said on Monday.

Hanging, poisoning and shooting are the most common suicide methods, the WHO said as it urged governments to adopt suicide prevention plans to help people cope with stress and to reduce access to suicide means.

"Suicide is a global public health issue. All ages, sexes and regions of the world are affected (and) each loss is one too many," the WHO's report said.

Suicide was the second leading cause of death among young people aged between 15 and 29, after road injury, and among teenage girls aged 15 to 19 it was the second biggest killer after maternal conditions. In teenage boys, suicide ranked third behind road injury and interpersonal violence.

Overall, close to 800,000 people die by suicide every year - more than are killed by malaria or breast cancer, or by war or homicide, the WHO said.

Global rates have fallen in recent years - with a 9.8% decrease between 2010 and 2016 - but declines were patchy. In the WHO's Americas region, for example, rates rose by 6% in between 2010 and 2016.

The report also found that nearly three times as many men as women die by suicide in wealthy

countries, in contrast to low- and middle-income countries, where the rates are more equal.

"Suicides are preventable," said the WHO's director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"We call on all countries to incorporate proven suicide prevention strategies into national health and education programmes."

The WHO said restricting access to pesticides was one of the most effective ways of reducing suicide numbers swiftly.

Pesticides are commonly used and usually result in death because they are so toxic, have no antidotes, and are often used in remote areas where there is no nearby medical help.

The WHO pointed to studies in Sri Lanka, where bans on pesticides have led to a 70% drop in suicides and an estimated 93,000 lives saved between 1995 and 2015.
