The Suicidal Patient and the Aeschi Philosophy

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Aeschi Philosophy
A short Aeschi narrative

• Personal background

• 1st crucial encounter
  • L. Valach

• 2nd crucial encounter
  • DA Jobes

• 3rd crucial encounters
  • 1st Aeschi Conference 2000
  • Aeschi Working Group

• Aeschi Conferences 2000-2011
Does a Shared Model of Understanding Improve Therapeutic Alliance?

• A narrative interviewing style is associated with a better therapeutic alliance
  • (Penn Helping Alliance Questionnaire)

• Acknowledging life-career issues is associated with a better therapeutic alliance

Michel K, Dey P, Stadler K, Valach L: Therapist sensitivity towards emotional life career issues and the working alliance with suicide attempters. 2004
Figure 1. Traditional (medical model) assessment of suicide risk versus Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS).

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Aeschi Philosophy
Guidelines for clinicians (2002)


• Even in a first encounter with a suicide attempter, health professionals should seek to develop a therapeutic relationship

• Only in a collaborative interviewing style can a basis for a working alliance be established
Aeschi Philosophy
Guidelines for clinicians (2002)

• To listen to the patient
• To explore the intrasubjective meaning of the act together with the patient
AUTHORS
J Allen
M Bostwick
GK Brown
M Goldblatt
J Holmes
DA Jobes
AA Leenaars
T Lineberry
MM Linehan
JT Maltsberger
K Michel
I Orbach
S Rizvi
E Ronningstam
MD Rudd
M Schechter
L Valach
I Weinberg
R Young

American Psychological Association 2011
Aeschi Principles

• Understanding – and treating – suicidality as a symptom of psychiatric disorder (depression) is not enough

• Clinical factors (depression, etc.) are important risk factors, but they do not explain the logic of the suicidal process

• Suicide stories are extremely individual
Aeschi Principles

• The aim is to reach a shared understanding of the patient’s suicidality

• Theories are useful/necessary in order to develop models for therapy

• There is not one single theory that can explain suicide
Aeschi Conference Cat

“This is all very nice, but it is not new…”
Aeschi Principles

• “Right”

• “It is what used to be called “good clinical practice””
AESCHI: Beyond Good Clinical Practice

• Forum for professionals involved in clinical suicide prevention

• Presenting, sharing and discussing patient-oriented concepts of suicidality

• Working on improving clinical suicide prevention as a never ending task
Aeschi Principles
Some related concepts

- **Psychodynamic Therapy**
  - Empathic connection with the patient
  - Countertransference hate in the treatment of suicidal patients (Maltsberger and Buie 1974)
  - Concept of validation (Schechter, 2007; Schechter & Goldblatt, 2011)
Aeschi Principles
Some related concepts

• **Attachment Theory, Mentalization**

  • The Secure Base (Bowlby, 1981)

  • Secure attachment relationships are the basis for mentalizing interactions (Allen, Fonagy, & Bateman, 2008)
Aeschi Principles
Some related concepts

• **Cognitive Therapy**

  • Vulnerability and the suicidal belief system (Rudd, 2006)

  • Concept of modes (Beck, 1996; Rudd, 2000)

  • Safety planning (Stanley & Brown, 2010)
Aeschi Principles
Some related concepts

• *Action Theory and Narrative*

• Actions are best understood in the context in which they develop.

• Actions are explained and understood through narratives
Aeschi Principles
Some related concepts

• The Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS)
  (Jobes, 2006)
  • A co-authored treatment plan
  • Suicide Status Form (SSF)

• Jobes 2012, Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior
Aeschi Principles
Some related concepts

- **ASSIP - Attempted Suicide Short Intervention Program** (Gysin-Maillart & Michel, 2013)

  - Narrative interview
  - Video-Playback
  - Identification of vulnerability and triggers
  - Safety planning
  - Mini exposure (video)
  - Regular letters over 2 years

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AESCHI in a NUTSHELL

So, AESCHI is about

• patient-oriented (as opposed to theory-driven) approaches to the suicidal individual

• empathic, collaborative therapeutic and preventive interventions for suicidal patients

• respecting the individuality of each suicidal patient
Aeschi West, Sonnenalp Resort, Vail, Colorado
Thank you for your attention

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