

## **Landmark Study Finds Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale Predicts Suicide Attempt**

*Rating scale opens the door for precision in intervention and prevention of suicide among wide spectrum of populations*

(New York, NY) – A landmark study led by Columbia Psychiatry researchers has shown that the Columbia Suicide Rating Scale (C-SSRS) is not only valuable in assessing suicidal behavior, but is significantly valuable in predicting an attempt. The paper was published in *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, December 2011.

The Institute of Medicine noted in 2002 the lack of definitions and standardization as one of the major impediments to suicide prevention. Subsequently, the FDA requested a standardized assessment tool for suicidal behavior and selected Columbia Psychiatry researchers to lead that initiative. The study, which builds upon that work, was carried out at three sites with adolescent suicide attempters and adults presenting to the emergency room with psychiatric problems.

Lead author and C-SSRS developer Kelly Posner, PhD, noted, “The results are likely to have tremendous impact both nationally and internationally. Now clinicians have a real scientific footing on which to base treatment interventions.” Before the C-SSRS, researchers and clinicians had no clear way in which to define risk. “Prevention depends upon appropriate screening and identification,” noted Dr. Posner. “In a seminal article in JAMA, Dr. John Mann and colleagues identified this as one of the two most important obstacles to suicide prevention.”

“Treatment was initiated at great cost for patients who didn’t need it and increased the burden for clinicians with unnecessary referrals,” she added. “What our study shows is that using the C-SSRS helps to identify patients that would have fallen through the cracks. It’s about saving lives and directing limited resources to the people who actually need them.”

“Having a proven method to assess suicide risk is a huge step forward in our efforts to save lives,” said NY Office of Mental Health Commissioner Michael Hogan. “Dr. Posner and her colleagues have established the validity of The Columbia–Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS). This is a critical step in putting this tool in the hands of health care providers and others in a position to take steps for safety.”

Posner and colleagues’ work over the last 20 years has established the C-SSRS as the definitive assessment tool for suicidal thoughts and behaviors. It is used world-wide in intervention studies and clinical trials across a broad range of disorders and diseases, and by institutions from the US Military to the World Health Organization to local fire departments.

Funding for the study was provided by the National Institutes of Health and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Visit <http://columbiapsychiatry.org/> for more information.