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Global research links mental health and self-harm with Encephalitis

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Findings of new research released for World Encephalitis Day, 22 February 2023



Two new, ground-breaking research papers, from authors in the UK and Mexico published for World Encephalitis Day on 22nd February 2023, have identified that Encephalitis patients are at a high risk of suicide and self-harm.

The UK paper titled ‘Mental health outcomes of encephalitis’, an international web-based study, surveyed 445 respondents from 31 countries and found that 37.5% of survivors of Encephalitis reported they had thought about or attempted suicide.

The Mexican paper ‘Suicidal thoughts and behaviors in Anti-Nmdar Encephalitis: Psychopathological features and clinical outcomes’ published in the Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences, gained data from 120 patients and found that 12.5% of patients had suicidal behaviours during early stages of the illness with nearly half carrying out a suicide attempt.

Both papers have been released in association with the Encephalitis Society to help raise awareness of World Encephalitis Day which takes place on 22nd February 2023.

Encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain. It can occur at any age, in any part of the world and is caused either by infection, usually viral, or by a person’s own immune system going wrong. There are over 5,00,000 reported cases of encephalitis around the world each year with mortality up to 40% depending on the cause.

Dr Ava Easton, CEO of the Encephalitis Society and co-author on both papers said, “These impactful and important research papers raise awareness that suicidality can be a not uncommon and serious manifestation of encephalitis in the early stages as a result of the illness, during relapses, and perhaps later in people’s journey of recovery."