

Evidence on the wish to die

I want to die

A persistent wish to die can occur about 1% of older people without severe illness.¹

But only one seventh want to end their lives.

Death wishes are often ambiguous,^{1,2} transient³ and do not always imply a genuine wish for death⁴

- Depression is common in severe illness, especially in the first year after diagnosis⁵
- Depression is commonly missed by doctors.⁶

MISSED OPPORTUNITY



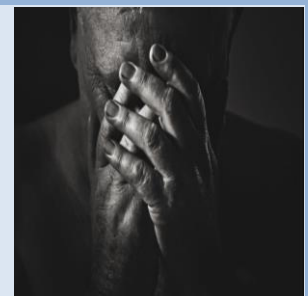
- The majority of those with a wish to die report being lonely and had symptoms of depression.¹
- In patients with progressive neurological disease, a wish to die is not related to cognitive or behavioural impairment but is strongly related to depression.⁷

- In the UK, loneliness is associated with long-lasting depressive symptoms.¹³
- Loneliness predicts pain, fatigue and depression.^{13, 14}

- A wish to die is strongly influenced by the perception of being a burden,⁸ or the fear of pain.⁹

- Of assisted deaths in Oregon in 2021, 54% felt a burden.¹⁰

- Half of 'unbearable suffering' is psychological and social and does not predict a wish to die.^{11, 12}



References

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