

# 5

## facts about suicide prevention in physiotherapy



### 1

#### Suicide prevention is everyone's business



While physiotherapy may not readily come to mind for suicide prevention, physiotherapists:

- commonly support people experiencing chronic physical illness, injury and disability
- are skilled at forming strong relationships with clients, families, carers and their local community
- can foster relationships so clients may feel comfortable disclosing thoughts of suicide to them.

### 2

#### One in two physiotherapists report receiving disclosure of a suicide plan



A survey of 338 Australian physiotherapists revealed nearly half had received at least one disclosure of a suicide plan during their career, which is not unexpected because:

- poor physical health is a risk factor for suicide
- nearly 50 per cent of people with chronic pain have thought about suicide
- 20 per cent of people who identify as male or non-binary and live with chronic pain have made a plan for suicide
- diagnosis of severe conditions is also linked to a heightened risk of suicide.

### 3

#### Suicide prevention strategies can be integrated into the workplace

Workplace practices that support suicide prevention include:

- leadership and care culture
- job strain reduction, communication and reduction of stigma
- self-care orientation, training, peer support and wellbeing ambassadors
- mental health and crisis resources, mitigating risk and crisis response.



### 4

#### Physiotherapists can act as LifeKeepers

LifeKeepers, also known as gatekeepers, are individuals equipped with the awareness, confidence, skills and knowledge to:

- identify those experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- connect them with appropriate support
- help individuals manage physical health conditions and contribute to reducing suicidal thoughts and behaviours.



### 5

#### Suicide prevention is supported by training



There are basic competencies in tailored suicide prevention training, such as:

- the ability to recognise suicidality (including warning signs)
- knowledge of local referral resources
- the ability to engage and connect with the person experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

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