

Systematic Tailored Assessment for Responding to Suicidality (STARS) Protocol: Development and Understanding of its Application

Invited lecture · Jacinta Hawgood

Ms. Jacinta Hawgood has worked at AISRAP for nearly 23 years. She is a Senior Lecturer and Program Director of Suicidology for the Graduate Certificate in Suicidology and Master of Suicidology Programs, which she jointly developed with Professor Diego De Leo in 2001. She has developed, delivered and evaluated suicide prevention training since 2000. Jacinta has specialist clinical and research interest in suicide risk assessment processes, the impacts of client and co-worker suicide on the worker, suicide prevention training evaluation and implementation, and personal suicide stigma. Jacinta has worked clinically with suicidal people for over 20 years and has supervised other psychologists in this domain since 2005. She is the lead author of Systematic Tailored Assessment for Responding to Suicidality (STARS) protocol published first in 2015 and updated in 2018, and has gained funding for numerous research projects and consultancies, has co-authored and edited a book, book chapters, and published numerous peer-reviewed articles and government reports in the field. Jacinta is a Director of the Board of MATES in Construction (Qld/NT) and Director of the National MATES Inc Board. She is also a member on several national and international advisory boards for government and non-government organisations regarding suicide prevention.

Abstract. For the past few decades we have learned that traditional actuarial risk assessment methods are unreliable for predicting suicide and suicide attempts. The move to psycho-social needs-based assessment processes based on structured professional judgement (SPJ) is now the recommended approach for assessing suicidality. This approach focuses on understanding the individual within their ecological context or social environment; the client is seen as an expert on their unique experience of suicidality. SPJ approaches offer the opportunity to explore multiple factors guided by empirical data which informs decisions around targeted needs. Systematic Tailored Assessment for Responding to Suicidality (STARS) protocol is one such approach; supported by STARS protocol training. Aim: To present develop-

ment, assessment and evaluation of the STARS protocol, and STARS protocol training, using research outcomes to inform future development and implementation. Method: Three different study designs focused on examination of STARS protocol and associated training impacts will be presented including a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Results: Main results of the these three studies: STARS protocol (2015) improvements; STARS Protocol (2018) training impacts, and longer term perceptions of feasibility, administration and utility (including adherence to administration) will be presented in summarised form to highlight key findings supportive of STARS protocol administration, STARS training and future design and development. Conclusions: Preliminary findings on STARS protocol and training reveal positive impacts for both the clinical and non-clinical workforces in a way that enhances competencies required for collaborative, compassionate and commensurate care. Use of SPJ to guide a collaborative exploration of psycho-social needs and understanding of the suicidal state is both feasible and essential if we are to competently facilitate a life worth more living for those who experience suicidal distress. Future recommendations for applied research on STARS protocol and training will be presented, including insights into a co-design study on STARS protocol with lived experience.