

Ethical Issues in Suicide Research and Clinical Work

Invited lecture · Vita Poštuvan

Assoc. Prof. Vita Poštuvan works as a researcher and Deputy Head of the Slovene Centre for Suicide Research (UP IAM) and Department of Psychology (FAMNIT) at the University of Primorska. She leads the work related to clinical-research and public-health interventions in suicidology, bereavement, crisis interventions and psychotherapy. She has participated in major European and Slovenian studies in the field of (public) mental health, suicidology and psychology, which were published in international journals. She has worked at the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry (NCNP) in Tokyo, Japan as well as in the Suicide Research Group, Department for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy, Medical University of Vienna, Austria, as a fellow researcher. Her professional work is also focused on psychological counselling, psychotherapy and prevention. As a psychological counsellor and cognitive-behavioural therapist she offers psychological support for students and individuals and implements mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. She is a member of national unit for psychological research within the civil protection.

Abstract. Suicidal behaviour arouses strong emotions and raises many ethical questions. The most obvious ethical dilemmas for professionals revolve around respect for the rights and dignity of the person, especially when someone harms himself or herself to the point of requiring involuntary hospitalisation. In these cases, respect for autonomy and principles of beneficence collide. Nowadays, we know the negative aspects of involuntary hospitalisation, such as the shame of being suicidal, the shame of a failed suicide attempt, and the high suicide rate after the first week of discharge from the hospital. In addition, suicidality often brings into conflict other ethical principles that will be discussed during the presentation.