

Temporal Risk Factors for Suicide After Suicide Bereavement

Invited lecture · Alexandra Pitman

Dr. Alexandra Pitman is an Associate Professor in General Adult Psychiatry in the UCL Division of Psychiatry and an Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust. She gained her undergraduate degree in Human Sciences from the University of Oxford, her MSc in Health Policy, Planning and Financing from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the London School of Economics, and her undergraduate medical degree at Imperial College. She completed her core training in psychiatry on the West London rotation, and her higher training in General Adult Psychiatry as an NIHR Academic Clinical Fellow on the North London/UCL rotation. She chose to focus on studying the impact of suicide bereavement as this was an issue that seemed relatively unexplored in British clinical or research settings. Her PhD at UCL was funded by the Medical Research Council, and was followed by an MRC Centenary Early Career Award and a Guarantors of Brain post-doctoral fellowship. Her clinical and research interests are the care of people who feel suicidal; the links between loneliness, social isolation and mental illness; and the prevention of suicide attempt.

Abstract. Temporal risk factors for suicide are under-investigated but have the potential to identify time points at which suicide prevention interventions could be targeted. This presentation will describe well-established temporal risk factors for suicide at the population level (such as seasonality) before reporting the findings of new research on temporal risk factors in specific groups. The first set of findings are from an analysis of the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (NCISH) dataset, describing the characteristics of patients who die by suicide on or near a significant date and the implications for clinical care. The second set of findings are from an analysis of Danish population registry data to investigate whether suicide and suicide attempt risk are elevated at specific emotionally salient time points after suicide loss: anniversaries of the suicide, birthdays of the deceased, and reaching the age at which a parent died by suicide. The presentation will conclude by considering the implications for support provided after suicide bereavement.