



Podcast Show Notes

Nurse Suicide and Substance Use Disorder: The Shocking Truth

Some disturbing data: even before the COVID-19 crisis scarred the mental well-being of nurses, research demonstrates that nurses, particularly female nurses, have been at higher risk of suicide than the general population. Also troubling: Suicide among nurses is most often linked to actual or impending job loss, including job loss relating to substance use.

This CE course is relevant to registered nurses and advanced practice registered nurses.

Episode 1 – Sober Evidence of SUD-Suicide Link

A nurse scientist reveals research documenting a grave link between substance use disorder and suicide among nurses, and a nursing Living Legend shares her personal story of job pressures leading to alcohol use and, ultimately, recovery.

Guests

Judy E. Davidson, DNP, RN, MCCM, FAAN

- Nurse scientist at University of California San Diego
- Research focus includes workplace wellness, mental health issues, and suicide and suicide prevention among healthcare professionals
- Led the development of the first suicide prevention program for nurses, which was awarded Edge Runner status, or a model for replication, by the American Academy of Nursing

Marie Manthey, PhD (hon), MNA, FAAN, FRCN

- Multi-award-winning author
- Credited with the development of the primary nursing care model
- Recognized in 2015 as an American Academy of Nursing Living Legend
- Participated in the development of the Minnesota Nursing Peer Support Network

Host

Theresa Gaffney, PhD, MPA, RN

- Assistant Professor, Marymount University Malek School of Nursing Professions
- Former Vice President, Product Development at the American Nurses Association

- Former Executive Director at the American Academy of Nursing
- Former President of the Virginia Board of Nursing

Reviewer

Lisa Simani, APRN, MS, ACNP

- Editor, Nurse Regulatory/Compliance Planner for Elite Learning
- 20 years of publishing experience
- Lead author of peer-reviewed articles for print- and web-based nursing continuing education provider companies

Episode Key Points

Suicide prevention

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is an invaluable resource for those struggling with mental health issues during the pandemic and beyond:

- Call 800-273-8255
- Visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Suicide among nurses

- The strain of COVID-19 has exacerbated burnout, substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide ideation or suicide among healthcare providers.
- Data collected from the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), the only database in the U.S. that codes deaths by occupation, shows that the risk of suicide among nurses is higher than the general population, as well as disproportionately among White female nurses.
- According to the most recent NVDRS data (2019), of nurses who died by suicide between 2003 and 2017, 94% had known job-related problems; they were either unemployed or in the process of losing their jobs as a result of one of three issues:
 - Chronic pain that was uncontrolled, and they needed to leave the profession
 - Mental health illnesses that were uncontrolled, and they needed to leave the profession
 - Being worked up in their job for substance use disorder (SUD), a disease, which led them out of their jobs and to psychological damage, which in turn led to suicide
- Job loss, or impending job loss, is a critical period of time in which to identify nurses at risk for suicide.

SUD related to suicide

- SUD is classified as a mental health disorder.
- Research demonstrates an interdependent relationship between SUD and suicide.
- Nurses typically lack the support of treatment services and often are not afforded opportunities to address their disorder during their employment, such as leaves of absence or continued employment following acute treatment. Instead, in many states the colleagues of nurses with SUD are required to report them to their state boards of nursing for substance use, which can lead to license suspension and the inability to work as nurses.
- Job loss contributes to nurses' risk of suicide.

SUD recovery

- Recovery is a lifetime process for nurses with SUD.
- Research demonstrates that the success of nurses in recovery from SUD who are reemployed as nurses lies in their being viewed in a person-first manner. Recovering nurses should be viewed by both organizations and colleagues not as solely nurses, but as both people in recovery and healthcare professionals.

References

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Resources

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

[American Academy of Nursing, Suicide Prevention in Nursing: Breaking the Silence](#)

[American Nurses Association, Nurse Suicide Prevention/Resilience](#)