

# SUICIDALITY AND DEPRESSION IN OLDER ADULTS: PREVALENCE, PREDICTORS, AND OUTCOMES

Akademisk avhandling

Som för avläggande av medicine doktorexamen vid Sahlgrenska akademien, Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentligens förs varas i hörsal Arvid Carlsson, Medicinaregatan 3, Göteborg, den 29 september 2023, klockan 13:00.

av Mattias Jonson

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Erkki Isometsä, Department of Psychiatry, University of Helsinki, Finland.

## Avhandlingen baseras på följande delarbeten

- I. **Jonson M**, Sigström R, Mellqvist Fässberg M, Wetterberg H, Rydén L, Rydberg Sterner T, Hedna K, Lagerlöf Nilsson U, Skoog I\*, Waern M\*. *Passive and active suicidal ideation in Swedish 85-year-olds: Time trends 1986-2015*. Journal of affective disorders. 2021; 290: 300-307. \*Shared last authors.
- II. **Jonson M\***, Sigström R\*, Hedna K, Rydberg Sterner T, Falk Erhag H, Wetterberg H, Mellqvist Fässberg M, Waern M †, Skoog I †. Time trends in depression prevalence among Swedish 85-year-olds: repeated cross-sectional population-based studies in 1986, 2008, and 2015. Psychological medicine. 2021; 53(6):1-10. \*Shared first authors. †Shared last authors.
- III. **Jonson M**, Sigström R, Van Orden KA, Mellqvist Fässberg M, Skoog I, Waern M. *Life-Weariness, Wish to Die, Active Suicidal Ideation, and All-Cause Mortality in Population-Based Samples of Older Adults*. The American journal of geriatric psychiatry. 2023;31(4):267-276.
- IV. Hedna K, **Jonson M**, Sigström R, Åberg M, Wilhelmsen K, Waern M. Healthcare visits for mental disorders and use of psychotropic medications before and after self-harm in a cohort aged 75. Aging & mental health. 2023: 1-9.

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## **Abstract**

Older adults have the highest risk of suicide of all age groups. Depression is a major risk factor for suicide in late life, but is also associated with lower quality of life, somatic disorders, and premature death. The aim of the thesis was to deepen the understanding of suicidality and depression in the oldest segment of the population.

In **Paper I** we showed that there was a substantial decrease in suicidal ideation in 85-year-olds between 1986 and 2008, but no change between 2008 and 2015. Suicidal ideation in these cohorts was associated with depressive symptoms, feelings of loneliness and residing in a long-term care facility. In **Paper II** we found that there was a decrease in depression in 85-year-olds, from 1986 to 2008, and further (in minor but not major depression) from 2008 to 2015. Changes in known risk factors for depression did not explain the decrease. Proportions using antidepressant medication more than doubled from 1986 to 2008 but remained stable from 2008 to 2015. In **Paper III** we found that a wish to die was associated with all-cause mortality more strongly than both life-weariness and active suicidal ideation. The association remained after adjusting for both somatic and mental disorders and psychosocial factors. In **Paper IV** we mapped healthcare contacts of older adults (75+) who self-harmed. During the year before self-harm, most contacts were in primary care. There was a sharp increase in contacts with specialized care, and an increase in antidepressant prescriptions, in the months after self-harm. Psychotherapy was rare both before and after self-harm.

The conclusion of this thesis is that there has been a positive development for the oldest age group in Sweden during the past decades regarding depression and suicidality. However, there are still areas with potential for improvement.

**Keywords:** Older adults, late-life depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm, suicide, time trends, all-cause mortality, epidemiology

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