

Wisconsin Medical Society: WMJ study explores differences in methods of suicide, self-inflicted injuries between sexes

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MADISON – A study in the current issue of WMJ compared the methods of self-inflicted injury between men and women during a 12-year period and found that the rates as well as the methods of both suicide and non-fatal self-inflicted injuries differed significantly by sex.

During the study years 2002-2014, men committed nearly 80 percent of all suicides in Wisconsin, but women had a much higher number of emergency department admissions for self-harm during the same period. The study also showed men were most likely to use firearms (53.9%), suffocation (24.8%) and poisoning, including drug overdoses (14.0%) as their suicide method, while women were most likely to use poisoning (42.8%), suffocation (24.7%) and firearms (22.5%).

“Self-inflicted injury, both fatal and non-fatal, remains an important public health issue in Wisconsin,” wrote the study’s authors, who are affiliated with the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and the Wisconsin Division of Public Health. “Greater attention must be focused on specializing suicide prevention. Given the variability of method of self-inflicted injury between sexes found in this study, considerations should be made to tailor suicide screenings and

prevention strategies based on sex and method.”

The study also found difference by sex in rates and methods of non-fatal self-harm. While the top three methods were the same, the rates differed by gender: poisoning (45.5% men vs 57.1% women), cutting or piercing (28.6% men vs 34.5% women) and other causes of injury not classified elsewhere (16.6% men vs 4.9% women).

Published by the Wisconsin Medical Society, WMJ is a peer-reviewed publication devoted to the interests of the medical profession and health care in the Midwest.