The Challenge

One in 25 of all 10-19 year-olds will be admitted to hospital as an emergency with an injury through self-harm, violence, or drug/alcohol misuse. Adolescents admitted with injuries from self-harm routinely have a psychological and social wellbeing assessment before they are discharged. This is because we know that they are more likely to repeat self-harm or commit suicide than other adolescents.

However, teenagers who are admitted to hospital because of violence or drug/alcohol misuse generally don’t receive an assessment – the question is, should they?

The Research

The research team from the University College London looked at anonymised data on adolescents admitted to any hospital in England with injuries related to self-harm, violence, or drug/alcohol misuse (April 1997 - March 2012). They estimated their risks of death or emergency re-admission in the ten years after discharge, and if these risks were increased compared to what would be expected for other admitted teenagers.

The Results

They found that adolescents admitted with injuries related to self-harm, violence, or drug/alcohol misuse, were at double the risk of death or emergency re-admission in the next decade, than other adolescents. This risk was the same no matter whether they had been admitted for injuries related to self-harm, violence, or drug/alcohol misuse.

The Impact

Based on these findings the researchers recommended that assessment of psychological and social wellbeing should be given to all adolescents admitted to hospital with injuries through violence or drug or alcohol misuse, as well as those admitted with self-harm. They also highlighted that research is needed to help decide on the best way to reduce risks of harm in these adolescents.

For more information about this research visit: www.ucl.ac.uk/cpru

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