

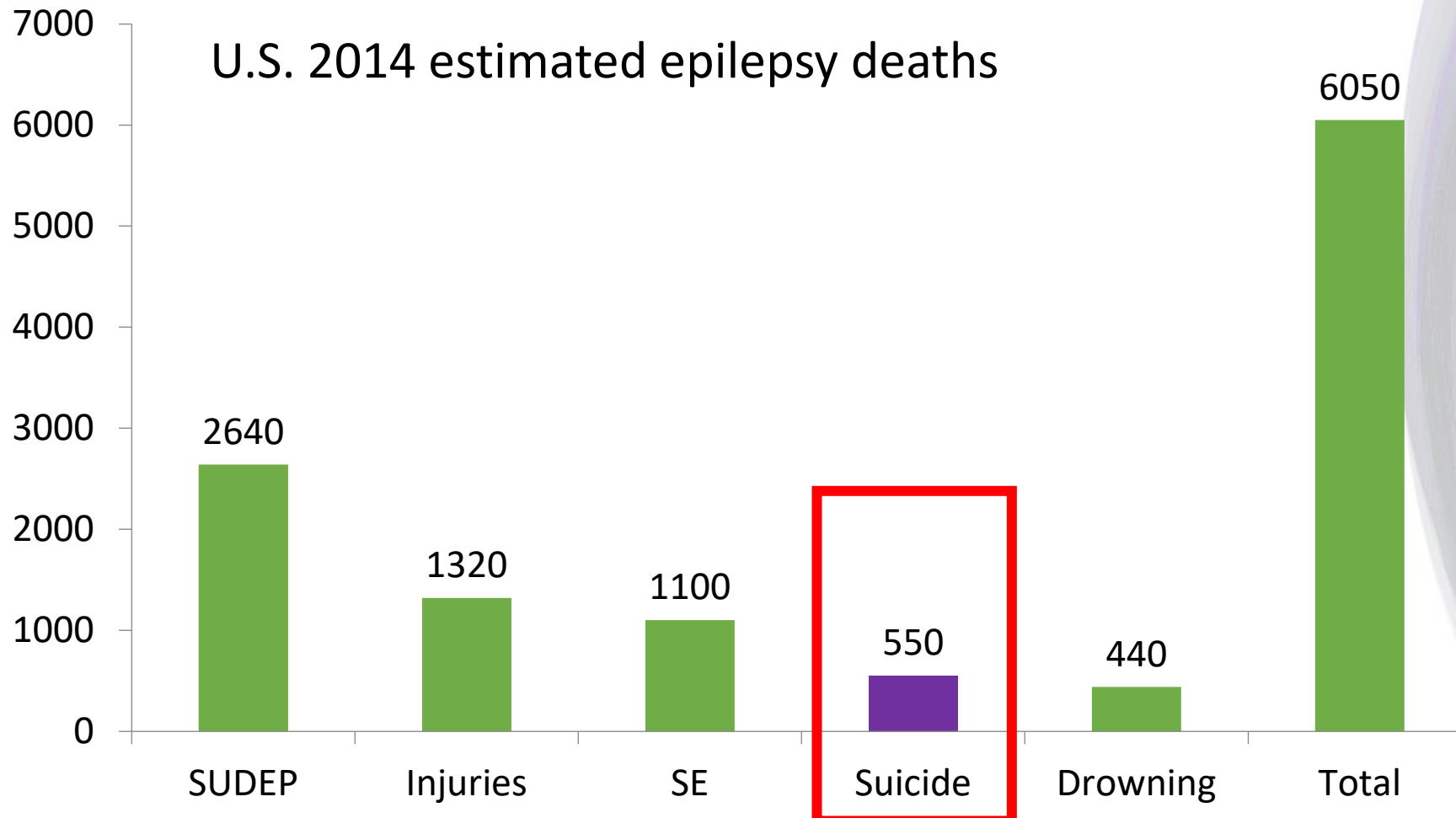
Suicide & Epilepsy

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Anxiety & Depression

- Very common in epilepsy
 - One third of patients
- Greater impact on quality of life than seizures
- Under-recognized and undertreated
- Associated with increased risk of suicide

Suicide: a Common Cause of Death in Epilepsy



Suicidal ideation and attempts

- Suicidal ideation is VERY common
 - Nearly 25% over the lifetime
- Suicide attempts
 - 7.4% of people with epilepsy

Who is at risk for suicidality?

- Younger age, especially teens
- Sex/gender
 - women/girls more likely to have suicidal ideation
 - men/boys more likely to complete suicide
- Lower social support
- Anxiety or depression, other psychiatric conditions
- Family history of suicide
- Recent epilepsy diagnosis
- More severe epilepsy-seizures, surgery

Why is there increased suicide risk in epilepsy?

Bidirectional relation

Increased risk before epilepsy onset, and after

- Independent of existing psychiatric disorder
- Common underlying biology
- Mechanism unknown
 - Neurotransmitters and receptors
 - Endocrine function, especially stress system
 - Inflammatory or structural changes

Hesdorffer et al. Ann Neurology 2012, Hesdorffer et al.
JAMA Psychiatry 2016, Kanner Epilepsy Curr 2014

What about antiseizure medications?

- 2008 FDA back box warning for entire medication class
 - Based on limited meta-analysis of clinical trials
- May be due to confounding by psychiatric symptoms
- No evidence of increased risk with newer medications
- Risk may be present with medications causing psychiatric side effects

Pugh et al. Neurology 2013, Klein et al. JAMA Neurol 2021, Pugh et al. J Am Geriatr Soc 2012

What can be done to prevent suicide?

- Detect and treat anxiety and depression
- Detect suicidality and take action

- Neurologists can help!

Screening

NDDI-E question 4

sometimes, always or often

PHQ-9 question 9

anything but “not at all”

What can be done to prevent suicide?

- Safety measures in the home
 - Restricting access to lethal means such as firearms
- Social support



What can be done to prevent suicide?

- Emergency hotlines and resources
- <https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/suicide-prevention-resources-parentsguardiansfamilies>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

We can all help prevent suicide. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.

 **1-800-273-8255**

Support for families

- Support groups, other resources
- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/loss-survivors/>
- <https://afsp.org/find-a-support-group/>
- <https://www.sprc.org/livedexperience/tool/resources-survivors-suicide-loss>
- <https://save.org/what-we-do/grief-support/>
- <https://allianceofhope.org/>

Thank you!

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