

Student e-Mental Health Survey Risk Mitigation Protocol Update: Identification of University Students at Increased Risk of Suicide

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Background

•Post-secondary students are at increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours, but mental health service utilization is limited amongst this population.^{1,2,3}

•Innovative outreach efforts are needed in order to more effectively connect vulnerable students to support services.

•As part of the WHO World Mental Health International College Student (WMH-ICS) Initiative, our student e-mental health team has administered a survey to Canadian university students weekly for over two years.

•The survey is accompanied by locally developed risk mitigation protocols that flag students at increased risk of suicide and offer them an expedited appointment to university counselling services.

Objectives

•Identify the number of survey respondents at increased risk of suicide.

•Examine the acceptance of an approach to connect at-risk students to university counselling services.

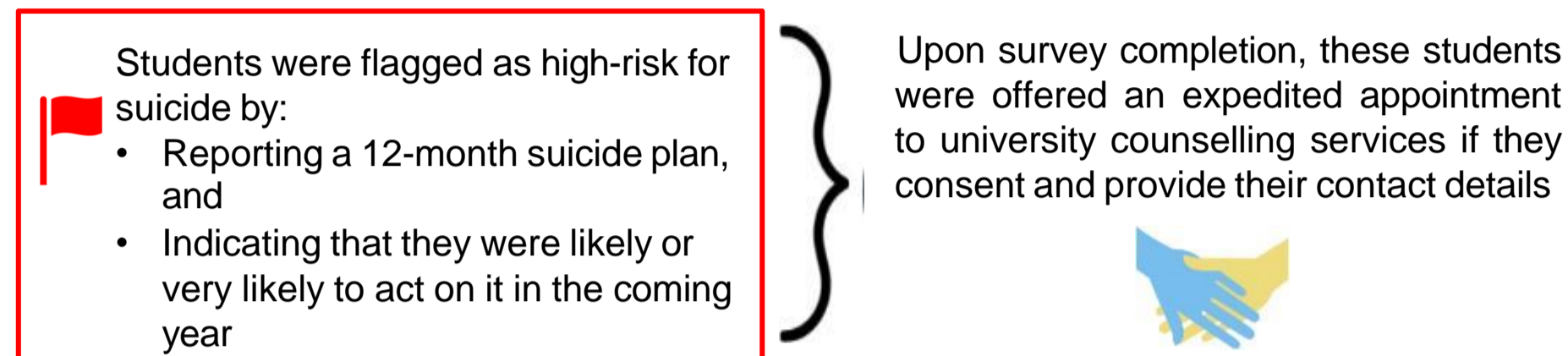
Methods

•Interim analysis was performed with 19,975 responses from an ongoing, repeated cross-sectional student mental health survey administered weekly at UBC (108 weeks), SFU (66 weeks), McMaster University (60 weeks) and UofT (8 weeks).

•Anonymous data from the survey's associated risk mitigation protocol was used to identify the number of students who were found to be at increased risk of acting on a recent suicide plan.

•The proportion of these students who provided their contact details and consented to being contacted by university counselling services for an expedited appointment was calculated for each institution.

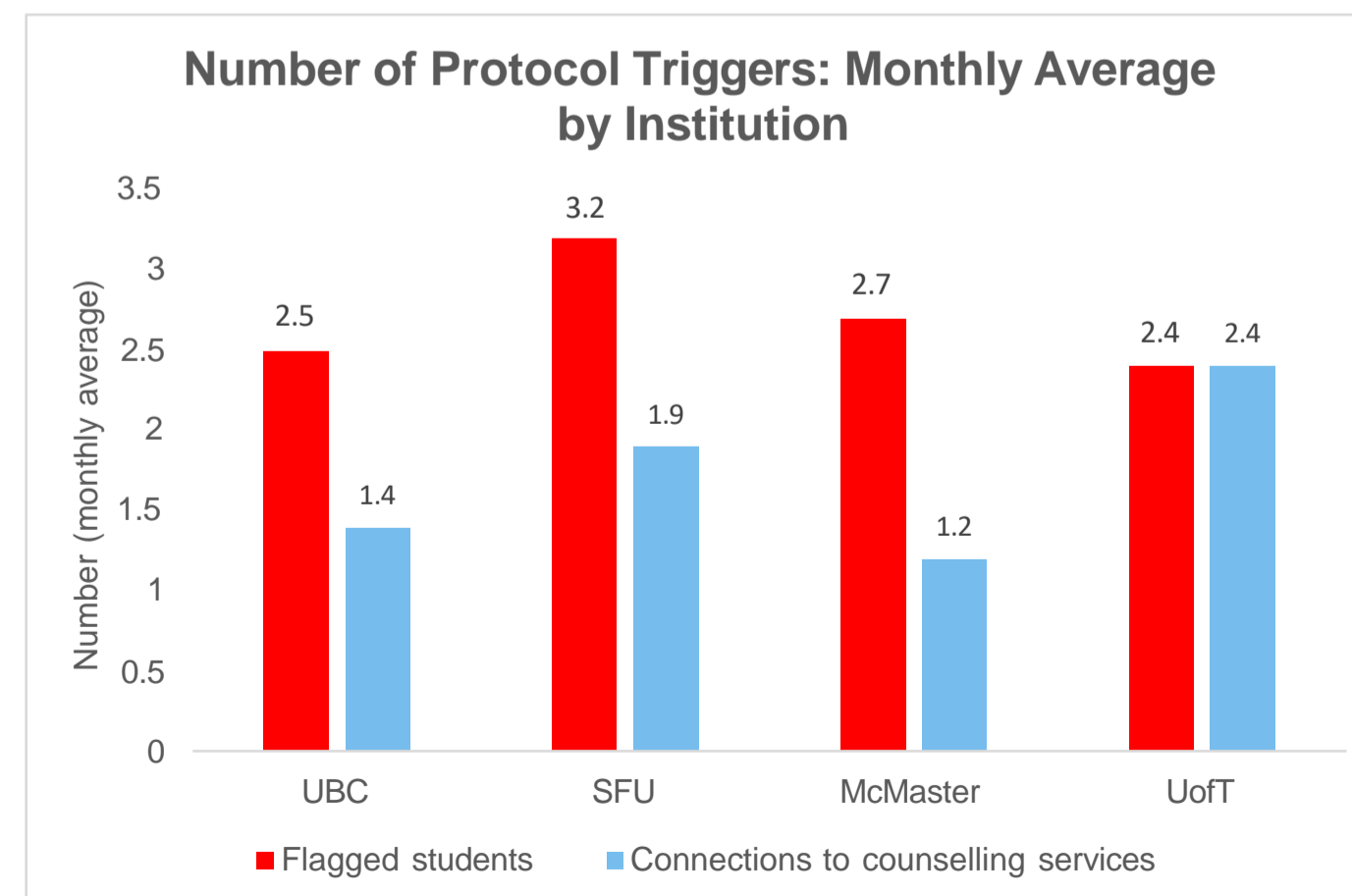
Results



Overall, **0.84%** of respondents (167 students) were flagged as high-risk for suicide

Of this high-risk subgroup, **55%** wanted to be connected to university counselling services when prompted.

This value ranged across institutions:



Discussion

•0.84% of all students surveyed were flagged for high-risk of suicide, revealing a small yet substantial proportion of students with imminent need of risk-assessment and mental health support.

•Our survey's risk mitigation protocol provides a targeted approach to outreach, demonstrating that when prompted, approximately half of students at increased risk of suicide will accept connection to university health services, but acceptance varies across institutions.

•Further research should explore potential protocol modifications to increase uptake and examine the effectiveness of this connection in providing care and improving mental health outcomes.

•Time-based variation in protocol triggers should also be explored in an effort to better understand periods of increased need.

Contact Information

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References

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