Caring Texts: Tailoring the Caring Contacts
Suicide Prevention Intervention for use in Alaska Native and American Indian Communities

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65,000 voices
From 2000-2010, suicide was the 2nd leading cause of death among AN/AI people age 10-34 years.

Suicide rates in AN/AI youths under age 25 in Alaska and the Northern Plains 5.5 times those for Whites of same age.

No change in AN/AI suicide rates in 30 years.

Urgent need for culturally-tailored, evidence-based interventions to prevent suicide in diverse AN/AI communities.
Background

- Caring messages sent over 1 year (letter, email, phone, text)
- Gives care and support only, non-demanding
- “Magic ingredient” = social connection
- Only rigorously studied intervention shown to ↓ mortality

Dear ________,

It has been some time since you were here at the hospital, and we hope things are going well for you. If you wish to drop us a note we would be glad to hear from you.
5-year, NIMH-funded study to culturally tailor and test the effectiveness of a culturally tailored suicide prevention intervention as compared with usual care in 4 diverse AN/AI communities

- Phase 1: Culturally tailor the intervention
- Phase 2: Randomized clinical trial of tailored intervention (n=1,200)
Methods

Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

Present Initial Feedback and Revisions to CAB for Refinement

Present Refined Study Revisions Back to Communities for Finalization

*Coding    *Thematic Analysis    *Adaptation
Focus Group/Interview Questions

- Study procedures
  - Recruitment & eligibility
  - Baseline interviews/instruments
  - Modality

- Intervention
  - Message content, tone and timing
  - When participants respond to caring messages
Results

- Study procedures
  - No age limit best; lifting upper age limit better
  - Include rural participants → allow enrollment/participation by phone
  - Expand message delivery options to include mail and social media options, per participant preference
Results

Baseline Interview Concerns

- Some wording not culturally-appropriate
- Some instruments too “western”
- Difference between self-harm and suicidal behavior not clear

Baseline Interview Suggestions

- Reduce reading levels
- Include locally-salient methods of suicide
- Assess involvement of alcohol
Results

- Message Content, Tone, and Timing
  - ✓ Original messages too generic
  - ✓ Decrease use of the word “hope”
  - ✓ Don’t be overly positive
  - ✓ Incorporate local languages but not too much
  - ✓ Refer to community activities and cultural events
  - ✓ Increase # of messages
  - ✓ Individualize to participants’ most difficult times of year
# Message Adaptations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Original Messages</th>
<th>Examples of Culturally-tailored Messages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John, good to meet you yesterday. Check out our website: <a href="http://www.careteam.org">www.careteam.org</a>. Hope the resources are helpful. -Kate</td>
<td>Hey John! We all have a story to share. I’m here to listen if you need me. -Kelley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi John, hope life is going well. –Kate <a href="http://www.care.org">www.care.org</a></td>
<td>Kamgan Ukudigaa, (Aleut: Merry Christmas)! The Russian Christmas Starring is on January 7 at 5PM at SCF Primary Care Lobby. You’re invited and everyone’s welcome! – Kelley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hey John, just wanted to say hello. Hope things are going OK. -Kate <a href="http://careteam.org">careteam.org</a></td>
<td>Hi John, It’s berry picking season. I hope you can make it out to a favorite spot this week! -Kelley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello again, John! Hope things are good. –Kate <a href="http://careteam.org">careteam.org</a></td>
<td>Aang (Aleut: Hello), John. I’m sending thoughts of strength and wellbeing your way. Remember you have a whole community of support behind you. – Kelley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Discussion & Next Steps

Phase 2

- Randomized clinical trial to test effectiveness of the tailored intervention for reducing suicide ideation, attempts, and deaths
- 1,200 participants, 500 in Alaska
  - Randomized to usual care or usual care plus caring contacts
- Data collection planned Winter 2018 through 2020
Clinical Trial Flow

All Participants who enroll

600 people
Baseline Assessment

Receive Caring Contacts by Text
Verify Contact Info @ 6 mos (all)

Follow-up Assessment

600 people
Baseline Assessment

Follow-up Assessment

12 Months

Alaska Native People Shaping Health Care
Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award 2011 Award Recipient
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Questions?
Thank You!

Qaĝaasakung
Aleut

Quyanaa
Alutiiq

Quyanaq
Inupiaq

‘Awa'ahdah
Eyak

Mahsi'
Gwich’in Athabascan

Igamsiqanaghghalek
Siberian Yupik

Háw'aa
Haida

Quyana
Yup’ik

T’oyaxsm
Tsimshian

Gunalchééesh
Tlingit

Tsin'aen
Ahtna Athabascan

Chin’an
Dena’ina Athabascan