

Elderly people's suicidal thoughts arise mainly because of health problems, says a nongovernment organization which reached out to 430 elderly people, half of whom are prone to suicide.

According to the Coroner's Report, 366 elderly people killed themselves last year, more than 35 percent of all suicides in the SAR. This means on average one elderly person committed suicide every day, the Suicide Prevention Services said.

In a scheme subsidized by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Community Project Grant, the group provided outreach services to 430 elderly people from 2013 to 2016.

HEALTH BLAMED FOR SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

Among them, 54.6 percent showed risk of suicide – with 43.7 percent reporting suicidal thoughts and 10.9 percent already with a plan or attempt to kill themselves. Most of them, 74.4 percent, said they were troubled by health issues.

Family problems came second at 30.5 percent and loss of spouse came third at 17.9 percent.

With the intervention of the scheme, the cases who reported suicidal thoughts dropped significantly

by 44.7 percent and those who had a plan to commit suicide was down by 57.4 percent.

Early intervention would stop suicides, the group said, adding that suicidal thoughts and behavior do not emerge immediately after the distressing events.

"[The public] should observe if the elderly people are down or seem unusual, or if they reject body checks and hide their health conditions, refusing to seek medical help," said Yip Kam-shing, a professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University's department of applied social sciences, who assisted in the study of the program's data.

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