

## Alarming rates of suicidal behaviours among Nepalese MSM: urgent need for tailored support

In a study published in the PLOS Global Public Health journal, focused on the mental health of men who have sex with men (MSM) in Nepal, researchers found alarming rates of suicidal thoughts and actions. Conducted between October and December 2022 with 250 participants, the study uncovered that 42.4% of MSM had experienced thoughts of suicide at some point in their lives. Additionally, 31.2% had made plans, and 21.6% had attempted suicide.

Several factors were identified as contributing to these high rates. MSM with depressive symptoms were at significantly higher risk for suicidal thoughts and planning, while younger MSM were more likely to attempt suicide. Surprisingly, individuals with higher education levels and those experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity also showed increased tendencies towards suicidal behaviours.

The study underscores the urgent need for early detection and tailored interventions to address mental health issues and food insecurity among Nepalese MSM. It emphasises the importance of simultaneously tackling mental health problems and social issues like food insecurity to reduce the prevalence of suicide-related concerns in this community.

These findings shed light on a crucial need for targeted support systems and interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by MSM in Nepal, aiming to mitigate the high rates of suicidal behaviours observed among this population.



## CERVICAL CANCER Global partners cheer progress towards elimination and underline challenges

STAR HEALTH DESK

World leaders, cervical cancer survivors, advocates, partners, and civil society are coming together to mark the third Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action. The Initiative, which marked the first time Member States adopted a resolution to eliminate a noncommunicable disease, has continued to gain momentum, and this year's commemoration promises to be a beacon of hope, progress, and renewed commitment from nations around the world.

Governments and communities are leading the way by declaring commitment and developing strategies to eliminate cervical cancer, and countries around the world are rallying behind the World Health Organisation's (WHO) call to action on November 17.

**Strong progress on HPV vaccination**  
Since the launch of the Global Strategy to Accelerate the Elimination of Cervical Cancer as a Public Health Problem three years ago, a further 30 countries, including countries with large populations and cervical cancer burdens such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, and

Nigeria, have introduced the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. As of today, 140 countries have introduced the HPV vaccine into their national immunisation programmes.

The global HPV vaccination coverage of girls that received at least one dose of HPV vaccine has increased to 21% in 2022, exceeding the pre-pandemic levels for the first time. If this rate of progress is maintained, the world will be on track to meet the 2030 target to make HPV vaccines available to all girls everywhere.

WHO, in collaboration with GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance and other partners, has initiated systematic efforts to catch up vaccinations for girls who missed HPV vaccination as a result of pandemic disruptions and to revitalise HPV vaccination programmes towards reaching the 90% coverage target.

### Weak progress on screening and treatment

Countries have invested to improve access to screening all over the world. This year, together with Unitaid (a global health initiative that works with partners to bring about innovations to prevent, diagnose and treat major diseases in low- and middle-income countries, with an

emphasis on tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV/AIDS and its deadly co-infections) and its implementing partners, Ministries of Health in 14 low- and middle-income countries reached the milestone of screening over a million women.

In most countries, those diagnosed with cervical cancer still need better access to surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and palliative care. Still, only 65% of countries include cervical cancer screening services, and 69% include radiotherapy for treatment of cervical cancer in the health benefit packages as part of universal health coverage schemes.

To enhance screening quality, reduce costs, and broaden access to health care services, WHO now endorses HPV testing as the preferred method for cervical cancer screening. This includes support for self-sampling, which makes screening even more convenient. In addition, WHO prequalified a fourth HPV test in June 2023, providing an additional option for countries seeking to implement advanced screening methods to identify patients requiring treatment more effectively.

Source: World Health Organisation



## Bullying of children in mainstream education

TANIA ZARIN KHUSBU

Bullying can be defined as persistently aggressive acts in a relationship where there is a power imbalance. Among children, some can have more power than others because of advantages in age, height and/or strength, appearance, popularity or social standing, intelligence or other talents, wealth, or membership in a dominant social group.

School-aged children most commonly engage in verbal bullying (like name-calling) and social bullying (like spreading rumours or purposefully excluding), though physical bullying of course also occurs in this age group. Compared to their neurotypical counterparts, children with special educational needs are, according to research, more frequently victims of bullying. Because of the social, emotional, and behavioural challenges that they present, children with special educational needs are often resented by their peers.

Bullying is not a trivial matter. Bullying can easily lead to poor social and emotional adjustment, low levels of school commitment, depressive episodes, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, and physical fighting. Educators need to acknowledge the dangers of bullying, act to support its victims, and prevent it from happening in the first place.

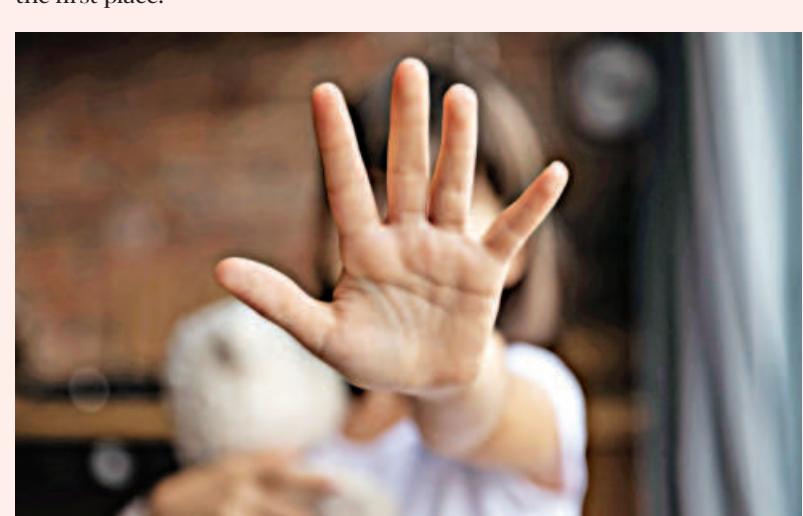
Numerous studies have indicated that the biggest obstacle we face in the struggle against bullying is educators' lack of acceptance of the issue—that is, either denying there's a problem or denying they have responsibility for it. Many educators lack the necessary skills to recognise many forms of bullying.

Also, many educators lack the skills to properly understand and handle children with special educational needs, and those educators can end up being themselves resentful towards those children for the challenges they present and so effectively supportive of those who bully them, causing that bullying to escalate.

The basic solution is raising awareness among all the relevant parties: teachers, principals, peers, and parents of peers. This is accomplished through training. Training should cover the characteristics of children with special needs, the many forms of bullying, the fallout from bullying, the advantages of empathy, and the positive role that children with special needs can play in the classroom and, thereafter, in society if they are properly accommodated.

In the end, the calm, welcoming, and understanding educational environment that such training would facilitate would be to the advantage of all students, not just those with special educational needs.

The writer is an educational psychologist.  
E-mail: tantazarinkhusbu@gmail.com



Semaglutide shows promise in reducing cardiovascular risks for non-diabetic obese patients



STAR HEALTH REPORT

A recent study looked at the effects of semaglutide, a medication used for diabetes, on individuals who are overweight or obese but do not have diabetes. This trial involved about 18,000 participants with higher body mass indexes (BMI) and a history of heart-related issues like heart attacks, strokes, or peripheral arterial disease.

The findings showed that those receiving weekly semaglutide injections experienced a lower rate of major heart-related problems like heart attacks, strokes, or cardiovascular-related deaths compared to those who received a placebo.

Each specific heart issue also showed improvements with semaglutide. Interestingly, the participants taking semaglutide also noticed significant weight loss compared to those on the placebo.

However, there were more withdrawals due to side effects among those on semaglutide, mainly because of gastrointestinal issues. Overall, this study suggests that semaglutide might have beneficial effects on heart health and weight management in individuals who are overweight or obese, even if they don't have diabetes.

However, the medication did cause more gastrointestinal side effects, leading to more people stopping the treatment.

**PAEDIATRIC UROLOGY**

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Paediatric Urology is a medical specialty that focuses on diagnosing and treating urological conditions in children, including the urinary tract system and the male and female genitalia. The urinary tract system includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra, while the male genitalia includes the penis, testicles, scrotum, and the female genitalia is vagina.

## Management of diabetes-related foot infections

Diabetes related foot infections (DFI) are increasingly common and can cause serious health issues. Recently, experts updated recommendations to help diagnose and manage these infections:

**Severity and diagnosis:** DFI severity depends on local and systemic symptoms. Doctors may sample tissue for culture using wound curettage or biopsy.

**Diagnostic tools:** X-rays and probe-to-bone tests might not always give a clear picture. In such cases, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is recommended.

**Bone infections (Osteomyelitis):** Culturing bone samples helps identify the bacteria causing bone infections. This can be done during surgery or through a minimally invasive procedure.

**Antibiotic use:** Antibiotics should not be used if there are no signs of infection in diabetic foot ulcers. Treatment for skin and soft tissue infections usually lasts 1-2 weeks, sometimes up to 4 weeks if improvement is slow.

**Target bacteria:** Initial treatment focuses on certain bacteria, especially *Staphylococcus aureus*. In some regions, coverage for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* may be necessary.

**Treatment duration:** Patients with DFI-related bone infections might need antibiotics for 3 weeks after amputation or 6 weeks without amputation.

**Surgical consideration:** Surgery might be necessary for moderate to severe infections.

**Adjunctive therapies:** Some additional treatments, like growth factors, topical antiseptics, or hyperbaric oxygen, are not recommended.

Overall, these recommendations highlight the need for better access to quality healthcare for individuals dealing with DFI and ulcers.

### DIABETIC FOOT



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