



Research Article

Reducing self-harm in adolescents: the RISA-IPD individual patient data meta-analysis and systematic review

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Plain language summary

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Self-harm is very common in young people and leads to an increased risk of death by suicide. Research so far has not provided clear evidence about which interventions can help to prevent self-harm repetition when young people present to services having harmed themselves. One way to understand what might help is to pool the results from lots of different clinical trials – this is known as a meta-analysis. This has already been done using the data published in research articles but has not led to clearer conclusions. In part this is because the information available in published articles is patchy and inconsistent which makes pooling the information and analysing it, difficult.

A more useful approach is to ask researchers who led the clinical trials for their original 'raw' data and then pool and analyse all that data – this is known as an individual patient data meta-analysis. This has the added benefit that it is possible to include studies where only some of the participants are young people. We did this, and were able to identify many more study participants along with their data, compared to earlier meta-analyses.

In this article, we describe how we searched for relevant research studies and the methods we used to obtain individual patient data from other researchers. We also describe our rating of the research quality of the studies we identified.

We identified more studies, with many more participants in total, than in previous pooled study research. Gathering the data from other researchers was very time-consuming and not everyone was willing or able to share their data. When we rated the quality of the studies that we found, many were not of high quality.

Our next step is to analyse all the data we have collected to see if it will tell us more about how we might prevent repetition of self-harm in young people.