**Oakley Mental Health Research Foundation**

**Funding for Research into Suicide Prevention in New Zealand: 2018 - 2020**

Suicide is a major health problem in New Zealand. The most recent data from the Ministry of Health shows that in 2014, 504 people died by suicide, or close to ten people per week 1. For comparison, the number who died from road traffic accidents over the same period was 293 2. The annual deaths from suicide are nearly the same as for breast cancer and prostate cancer. Suicide is the most common cause of death amongst youth, is the second leading cause of premature death in Maori males, and second leading cause of deaths in non-Maori males (after ischaemic heart disease), when age standardised mortality rates are examined. Despite some progress in reducing the rate of suicide in youth the overall rates have remained comparatively constant over the last ten years 3.

The cost of suicide, both economic and non-economic is substantial. The direct economic cost has been estimated to be over $300 million per year while the economic and non-economic costs (allowing for years of life lost) for suicide and suicide attempt is thought to be in excess of $3.5 billion 3. However, these figures do not reflect the immense personal tragedy of any suicide and the profound effects on family/whanau and the wider community.

Internationally, suicide is recognised as a potentially preventable public health problem, with an individual’s vulnerability to suicide being increased by the interaction of a number of societal, community, family and individual factors. Mental health issues are a major contributing influence and a number of potentially useful prevention strategies have been identified 4.

Despite the health, social and economic costs of suicide there is little money dedicated to fund research on suicide prevention. New Zealand has a number of internationally recognised researchers but the available funding is limited and other more high profile conditions receive the bulk of the funding from both public and philanthropic sources. To help address this issue the Oakley Mental Health Research Foundation will put aside $300,000 in total over the next three years (application rounds 2018, 2019, 2020) to fund research into suicide. Applications can investigate any aspect of suicide prevention. The Foundation encourages partnerships with other funding organisations to support effective and potentially transformative research. Pilot studies preparatory to making larger grants to other funding bodies will also be given consideration.

1. Suicide Facts: 2014 Data. Ministry of Health 21 December 2016.
2. Annual Number of Road Deaths Historical Information, Ministry of Transport.
3. Estimating the benefits of investment in an ongoing suicide mortality review - A cost benefit analysis December 2015. Health Quality and Safety Commission. [www.hqsc,govt.nz/assets/SUMRC/PR/Suicide\_Mortality\_Review\_Cost\_Benefit\_Analysis\_pdf](http://www.hqsc,govt.nz/assets/SUMRC/PR/Suicide_Mortality_Review_Cost_Benefit_Analysis_pdf)
4. Zalsman G, Hawton K, Wasserman D et al. Suicide Prevention Strategies Revisited: A 10 year systematic review. Lancet Psychiatry 2016;3:646-59