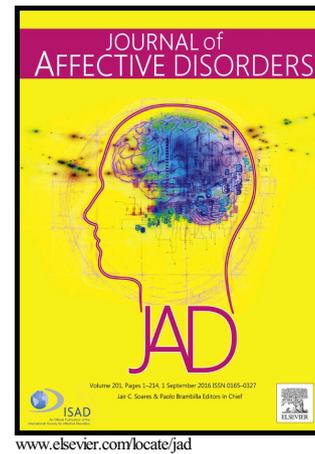


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Age-related differences in self-harm presentations and subsequent management of adolescents and young adults at the emergency department

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## Age-related differences in self-harm presentations and subsequent management of adolescents and young adults at the emergency department

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### Highlights

- We investigated self-harm in 12-25 year olds attending the emergency department
- A striking excess of females in younger patients had receded by young adulthood
- Physical severity of self-harm and the use of self-injury increased with age
- Repeat self-harm was more likely among the younger people in the sample
- The youngest people were more likely to receive adequate assessment and aftercare

### Abstract

#### Background

Characteristics of self-harm differ across ages, but there is little work identifying age-related differences in younger people. Young people entering adolescence face emotionally and developmentally different challenges to those entering adulthood. This study investigates how Emergency Department (ED) presentations and management of self-harm differ through adolescence and early adulthood.

#### Methods

3782 consecutive self-harm episodes involving 2559 people aged 12-25 years were identified from an existing database of Leeds ED attendances from 2004-2007. Odds ratios for each of four age bands were compared to the remaining young people.

#### Results

The female to male ratio was 6.3:1 at 12-14 years old, decreasing with successive age groups to 1.2:1 at 22-25 years old. Self-poisoning was commoner in those under 18 years old. 18-25 year olds were more likely to self-poison with prescribed medications, mixed overdoses, alcohol or recreational drugs. 18-25 year olds more often required medical treatment for the effects of the self-harm. 12-14 year olds were more often seen urgently by ED medical staff and offered high intensity mental health aftercare. Repetition of self-harm was commonest in 12-14 year olds, although multiple repetition of self-harm was commonest in 22-25 year olds.

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