

## Professor AJFM Kerkhof

Department of Clinical Psychology and the EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research, Faculty of Psychology and Education, VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



Ad Kerkhof (58) is professor of clinical psychology and suicide prevention at the Vrije University in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He teaches masterclasses in suicide prevention in graduate and postgraduate education. Currently he is involved in a nationwide study into the effects of training programs in the application of new multidisciplinary guidelines in mental health care in The Netherlands. His studies focus on the delivery of mental health care services in suicide prevention. From 1992-2003 he was co-editor in chief of *Crisis*, now he is associate editor. He is the Dutch national representative on the IASP council of national representatives.

### **Effectiveness of Online Self-Help for Suicidal Thoughts: A Randomized Controlled Trial**

AJFM Kerkhof, BAJ van Spijker, & A van Straten ([ajfm.kerkhof@psy.vu.nl](mailto:ajfm.kerkhof@psy.vu.nl))

**Context:** Many persons with suicidal thoughts are reluctant to seek help. A web-based intervention can reach those who are hesitant to go to face to face services. Although web-based interventions have been studied for mental health problems, no web-based intervention specifically aimed at reducing suicidal thoughts has been developed and evaluated.

**Objective:** To determine whether a web-based intervention can be effective in reducing suicidal thoughts.

**Design, Setting and Participants:** A randomized controlled trial comparing an unguided web-based self-help intervention for suicidal thoughts (n=116) with a waitlist control group (n=120) was conducted. Between October 2009 and November 2010 236 adult participants were enrolled. Assessments took place at baseline and 2, 4 and 6 weeks after baseline.

**Intervention:** Our intervention is based on the cognitive model, using mainly cognitive behavioral techniques. It consists of six modules, each taking one week to complete. Although no structural guidance is offered, participants can receive up to six automated motivating e-mails, and have the opportunity to pose questions on the website, which are answered in the FAQ section.

**Main outcome measure:** All measures were self-report. Primary outcome measure was suicidal thoughts, measured with the Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSS). Secondary outcomes measures were depressive symptoms, anxiety, hopelessness, worrying, and health status.

**Results:** Will be presented at the conference

**Conclusions:** Web-based self-help is more effective in reducing suicidal thoughts than a waitlist control group. Additional research is needed to confirm these results.