

## Blood Tests: Reliable Suicide Detectors?

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Depression has become an impacting illness in the United States. According to Centers for Disease Control, in 2008, one in ten adults reported to having depression. Depression decreases a person's ability to do normal activities, but it greatly affects the person's mental health as well; it can lead to the decision to take one's own life. Many people almost never disclose the morbid thoughts they have, making imminent suicide difficult to detect. However, scientists are looking into a blood test that can possibly identify when a person is at risk of suicide.

The blood test's purpose is to find select biomarkers, molecules indicating how active certain genes are. The high or low expression of specific genes can determine whether the people are thinking about suicide. The research team, led by scientists from the Indiana University School of Medicine and the VA Medical Center in Indianapolis, performed their study on a group of white men with bipolar disorder. They met with the researchers every three to six months, giving blood samples and answering

psychiatric tests at each visit. Nine of the patients had changes in their suicidal thinking due to emotional disorders, and the blood samples drawn from when they had suicidal thoughts had high expressions of the gene called SAT1 and the low expression of the gene called CD24.

The researchers also examined blood samples from nine men who had killed themselves, as well as another group of patients with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Both also had high expressions of the gene SAT1. Though these tests have had consistent results, it is far from becoming a reliable test because of multiple factors that may counter its accuracy.

First, the study was done predominantly on a group of white men. In order to be considered a reliable test, the test should be applicable to all who are susceptible to depression. This includes women, who are more likely to be diagnosed with depression, as well as those living in unfavorable situations, such as those who have recently experienced a divorce or separation. Patients of different races and ages should be considered to see whether the test is applicable and consistent to all people.

Second, the appearance of the

biomarkers did not indicate the degree of the suicidal thinking. Scientists cannot measure the intensity of depression a patient is feeling. Questionnaires may allow scientists to have a general idea of how the patient is feeling, but the intensity of suicidal thinking

is only known by the patient. It is difficult to exactly measure the intensity of depression when the scale the patient is basing their depression on may differ from how researchers interpret their feelings. The test leaves the question of whether the genes are also expressed when the patient is experiencing depression, but not suicidal, thoughts. Third, most people do not take blood tests often. Unless they

have certain medical conditions, the frequency of blood tests depends on how often the doctor requires the patient to be tested.

Patients with depression may be able to start having routine blood tests, but it does not take into consideration the people who do have depression, but are undiagnosed. A person on average has three doctor visits per year, and the high cost of health insurance and consequently doctor visits may discourage people from visiting doctors.

Using biomarkers to indicate whether a person is about to commit suicide can possibly prevent multiple deaths, but more research is needed to define the specific nature of the genes. Instead of focusing on detecting suicide thoughts, detecting depression and finding more effective ways to treat depression can counter both depression and suicide rates.



## TEA TIME WITH TINA

### 'Butter Face' But-Her-Face

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According to my super legitimate source, more specifically urbandictionary.com, the term butter face is "everything about a chick looks good, 'but-her-face.' In many cases, conversations between two heterosexual boys usually go something like this:

"Dude, she's definitely a nine out of ten!" "Are you serious—she is definitely a BUTTER FACE!"

Fast forward a couple of years and the same "bros" are rating girls on a scale of 0 to Kate Upton. The conversation has transformed to this: "What is with all her makeup?!" "Yeah, dude, she looks like a clown—she doesn't look pretty with it!"

See how brilliant young teenage boys with raging hormones are? It is no secret that some girls wear makeup. Heck, guys wear makeup and you don't see any judgments there. Society's standards of women have been hyperbolized by airbrushed models and actresses on magazine covers, and apparently, all women are now expected to look 'dewy' and perfect 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

But who cares! If anyone ever tells you that you are beautiful, they are not lying. Everyone is uniquely beautiful, but some people choose to wear makeup, because it increases their confidence in this judgmental society.

Too much makeup? What a streetwalker. No makeup? Gosh, cover that "pizza" face up. To all the ladies out there: If makeup makes you feel comfortable, wear it. I understand that the emphasis on beauty perpetuated by a culture that believes skinny is beautiful is hard to deal with, so go ahead, you deserve to look beautifully enhanced. As for the guys: talk to me when you go through childbirth and realize that girls don't look good just for you, but also for themselves.



## Social Networks: TMI Online?

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According to CNN, since 2012, approximately one in four people around the world have used social networking sites to save themselves from boredom by connecting with others online, and, unfortunately, sometimes with strangers.

With the growing popularity of social media, the Pew Research Center states that 89 percent of social network users use these sites to keep up with family and friends, 57 percent to make plans with loved ones and 49 percent to make new friends.

When surfing the Internet, it is evident that much of the information that was once considered private is slowly turning

public. However, is it necessary to share such invasive information with the rest of the world?

Hannah Anderson, a 16-year-old girl who lives in San Diego County, California, was kidnapped by James Lee DiMaggio. When Anderson was later safely brought back home, she began to answer questions from Ask.fm, one of the current popular socializing sites where users answer questions from anonymous people.

These questions, later publicized for its explicit details, ranged from the survival of her captivity to other aspects of her personal life. Anderson's ask.fm account was eventually disabled, but her answers have been read and the entire answer thread can be found with a simple search on Google.

When any information is

shared online, it is forever saved and can be traced back to the person who posted the information. Words and images may remain on the Internet for long periods of time, available for scrutiny by identity thieves, 'spammers' and stalkers. For instance, sharing where you live, your phone number and other personal information can put your safety at risk.

However, it isn't safe to share too much information online since it can spread like wildfire to strangers. Things that are too personal should be kept private from strangers instead of posting it online.

In today's society, limiting the availability of personal information is very crucial as dangerous situations can happen when least expected.

## Standards Retrenched to Core

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Common Core Standards (CCS) have a huge impact on the U.S. today. 45 out of the 50 states—excluding Texas, Alaska, Nebraska and Virginia—have adopted these standards that focus on English Language Arts, History, Math and Science. (Minnesota only adopted English and Math standards.)

According to corestandards.org, "the standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy."

However, in order to achieve

this, CCS should increase the difficulty levels of each subject. Only then will more students be competitive for college scholarships and jobs.

The CCS limit the variety of topics and subjects taught in the 45 states, but instead of providing a rudimentary education of various subjects, the new standards cover a few chosen subjects more extensively.

Therefore, if the standards are raised, students are more likely to focus and succeed in class(es), as well as learning more from the intensive material given.

As opposed to mediocre work, more difficult standards, among other factors, will stimulate the mind. By raising the bar, students are forced to step up to the challenge or fall behind.