

Ketamine reduces suicidality in depressed patients

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Drug treatment options for depression can take weeks for the beneficial effects to emerge, which is clearly inadequate for those at immediate risk of suicide. However, intravenous (IV) ketamine, a drug previously used as an anesthetic, has shown rapid antidepressant effects in early trials.

Researchers have now explored ketamine's effects on suicidality in patients with treatment-resistant depression, and are publishing their results in the September 1st issue of *Biological Psychiatry*. Ketamine acutely reduced [suicidal thoughts](#) when patients were assessed 24 hours after a single infusion. This reduction in suicidality was maintained when patients received repeated doses over the next two weeks.

Corresponding author Rebecca Price commented on these encouraging findings: "If these findings hold up in larger samples of high-risk suicidal patients, IV [ketamine](#) could prove an attractive treatment option in situations where waiting for a conventional antidepressant treatment to take effect might endanger the patient's life."

Since this was a preliminary study in a small group of depressed patients, further research is needed to replicate these results. However, the findings are promising and could result in improved treatment for suicidal patients in the future.

More information: The article appears in [Biological Psychiatry](#), Volume 65, Issue 5 (September 1, 2009), published by Elsevier.

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