

Knowledge, Self-confidence and Attitudes towards Suicidal Patients at Emergency and Psychiatric Departments in Flanders: a Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of an Educational Poster Campaign

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Background

Educational posters are commonly used to enhance knowledge, attitudes and self-confidence of patients, yet little is known of the extent to which they may be effective for educating health care professionals as well. Based on prior research of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center in the United States¹, a poster and accompanying evaluation and triage guide on detecting and managing suicidal behaviour in patients have been developed and implemented, targeting both emergency and psychiatric departments in Flanders. The main aim of this study was to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of this educational poster campaign in improving knowledge, self-confidence and attitudes for both staff of mental health care and emergency departments.

Methods

In a multicenter cluster randomized controlled trial, staff from 39 emergency and 38 psychiatric departments throughout Flanders, participated in the study.

A structured self-report questionnaire was used to assess knowledge about suicide (QPR and SIT), provider confidence and beliefs in suicidal behaviour management (CBQ) and attitudes towards suicidal patients (ATTS).

Fig. 1 – Overview of the (non-) participating Flemish hospital departments

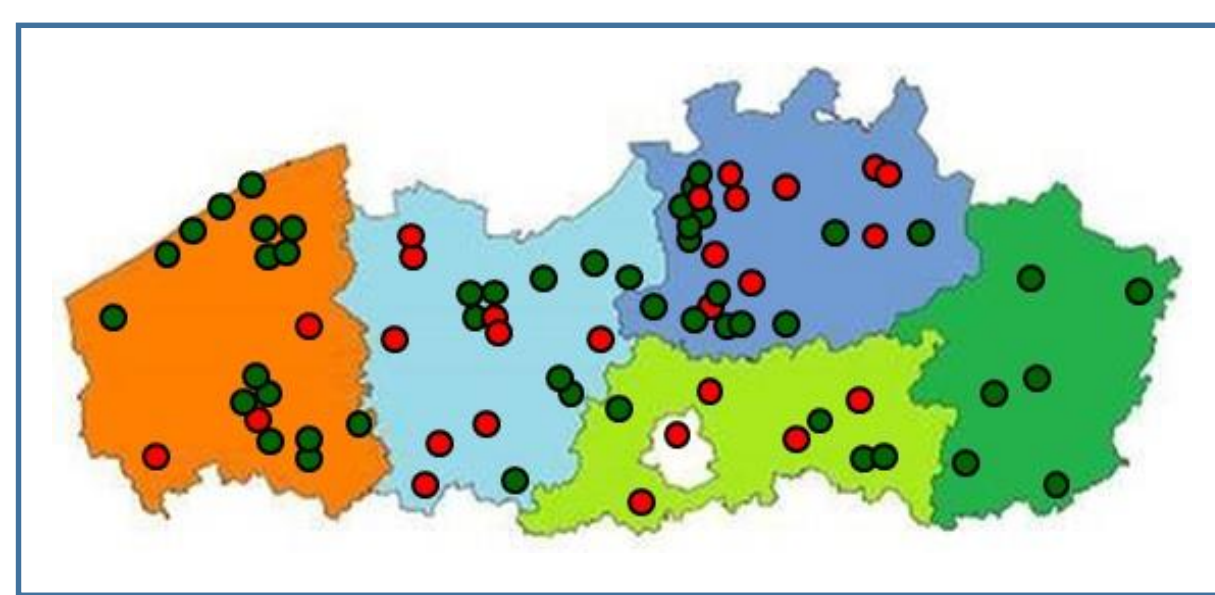
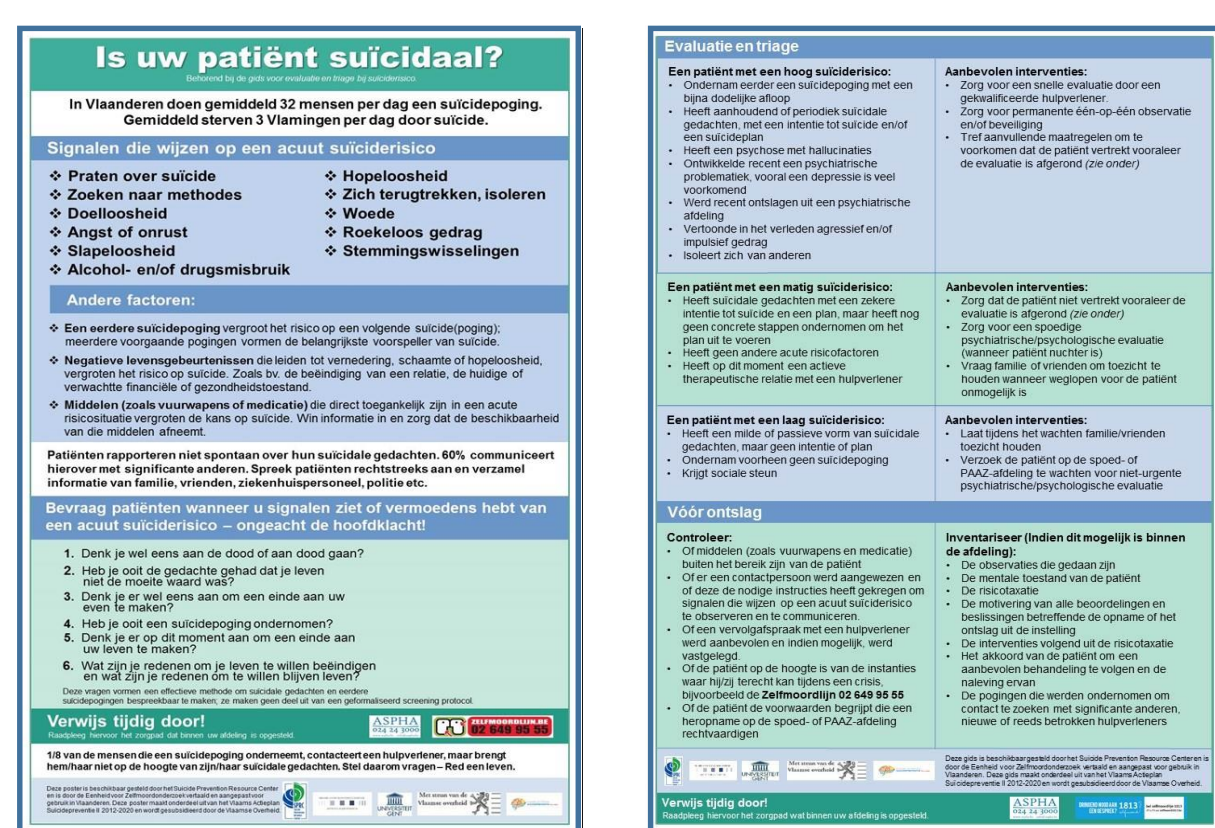


Fig. 2 – Poster and clinical guide

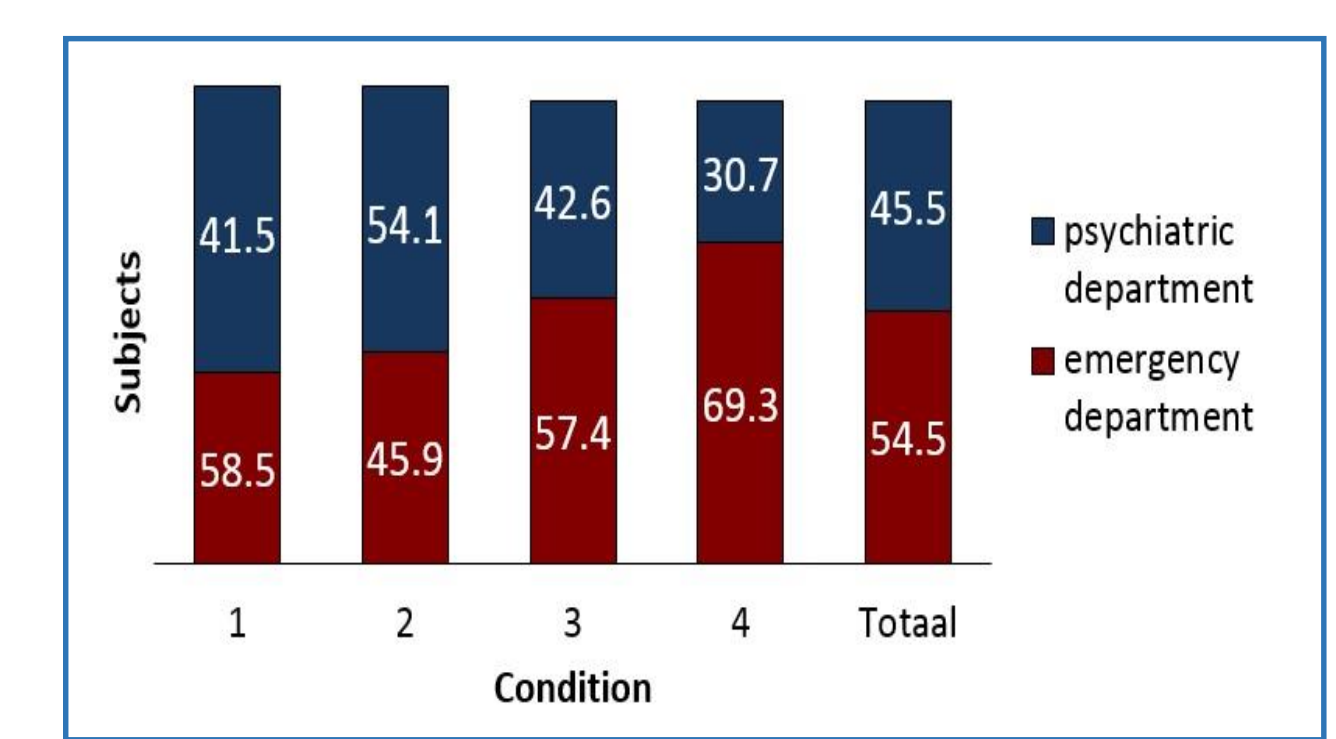


The participating health departments were randomly assigned to experimental or control conditions according to a Solomon four-group design². This design examines the possibility of pretest sensitization by comparing 4 groups (see Figure 3).

Fig. 3 – Solomon four-group design

| Condition | Pretest | Intervention | Posttest |
|-----------|---------|--------------|----------|
| 1 | X | X | X |
| 2 | X | | X |
| 3 | | X | X |
| 4 | | | X |

Fig. 4 – Percent of subjects (N = 1171) stratified by condition and hospital department



Results

Based on the flowchart developed by Braver and Braver (1988)³:

- No significant results were found for QPR scores of both health departments ($p > .05$).
- No significant results were found for SIT scores of both health departments ($p > .05$).

Fig. 5 – Flowchart QPR (A) and SIT (B)

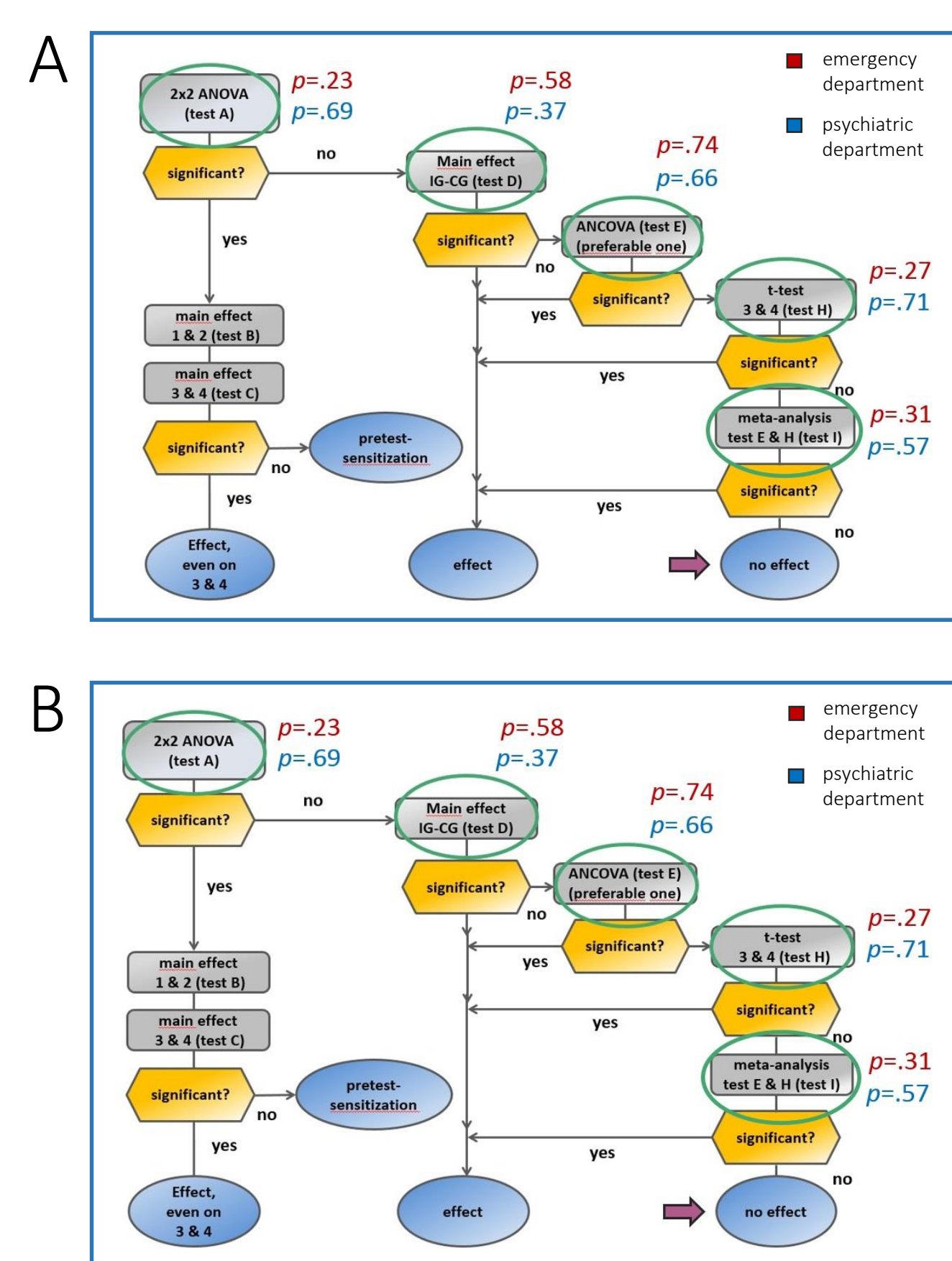
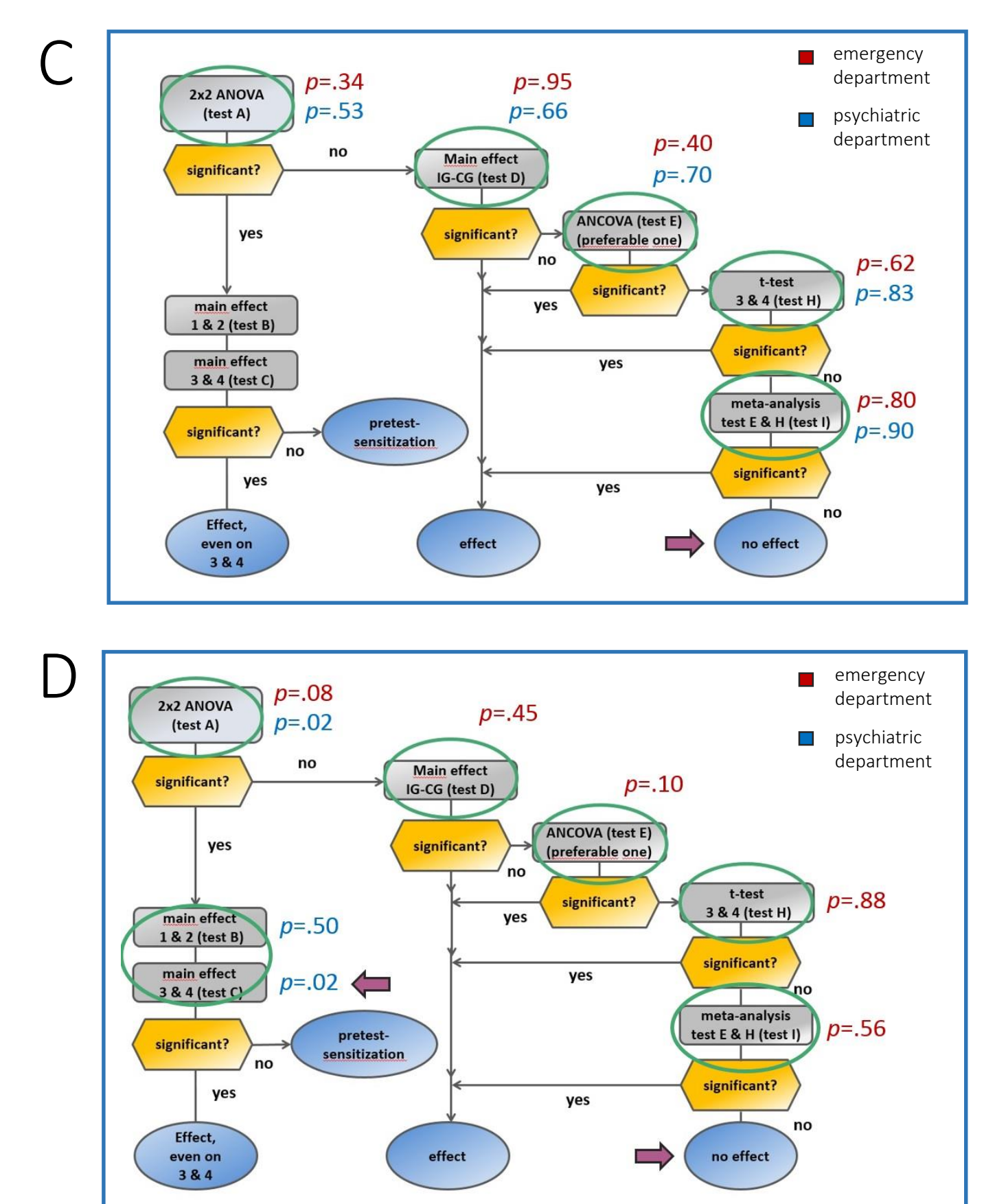


Fig. 6 – Flowchart CBQ (C) and ATTS (D)

- No significant results were found for CBQ scores of both health departments ($p > .05$).
- Significant results were only found for the ATTS scores of staff from psychiatric departments that were allocated to condition 3 ($p > .05$).



Conclusions

In this study, the poster and accompanying evaluation and triage guide appeared to have no effect on staff's knowledge about suicide and their self-confidence in suicidal behaviour management. However, the findings suggests that the poster campaign may have a beneficial effect on attitudes, but only for personell from mental health departments that were assigned to the un-pretested condition. In light of the findings of this study, it is recommended to evaluate the effect of this poster as a part of a multimodal educational program in a more heterogeneous sample and targeting other gatekeepers as well.

References

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