

Suicide by Jumping



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Suicide & Media Reporting



- Media covering sites with high rates of suicide by jumping appears to generate contagion or “copycat” effect (Beautrais, 2007; Reisch & Miechel, 2005)
 - Site attains “iconic” status as jumping site (Beautrais, 2007)
 - SPRC, AFSP, & AAS has recommendations for safe coverage following a suicide at <http://www.afsp.org/news-events/for-the-media/reporting-on-suicide>
- Media must take a muted approach with coverage of jumpings
 - Muting media coverage correlated w/ reduction in suicides by specific method (Sonneck et al., 1994)
 - Goal for media should be to minimize imitation and encourage help-seeking (Gould, Jamieson, & Romer, 2003)

Contagion



- Inferential studies have shown cluster effect of suicides among youth, influenced by temporal-spatial factors (for a review see Gould, Jamieson & Romer, 2003)
- Relative risk of suicide for 15- to 19-year olds 2-4 times higher after exposure to another's suicide
- Media coverage can increase clustering
 - “Dose-response relationship”
 - ✦ Magnitude of increase in suicides proportionate to amount, duration and prominence of media coverage

Characteristics of Suicide by Jumping



- Most suicides by jumping are from high-rise housing (60% Singapore, 45% Hong Kong, 30% NYC)
- 2 types: high rises (proximity) and hot spots/iconic sites (reputation and notoriety)
- Study of bridge jumpers: younger, more severe, short term crisis, more psychological disorders, impulsive
- Most who survive a jump at iconic site or are rescued do not subsequently die by suicide – ambivalent, impulsive, and if thwarted will usually survive.

“Suicide by Jumping: A review of research and prevention strategies (Annette Beautrais 2007, *Crisis*, 28, 58-63)

Means Restriction and Public Opinion



- **Must combat misguided public opinion**
 - Public believe that suicide is inevitable and means restriction ineffective as prevention strategy (Miller, Azrael & Hemenway, 2006)
 - ✦ In a large national survey, majority believed attempters would use method substitution if diverted from attempt due to bridge barrier

Support for Installing Barriers



- Bridge barriers are effective in preventing suicides (see review Beautrais, 2007; Beautrais et al., 2009)
- “Substitution effect”
 - Suicide by jumping at nearby jumping sites does NOT show a “substitution effect” when barriers installed (Beautrais, 2007; Skegg & Herbison, 2009)
- Overall method substitution
 - Generally, those thwarted from preferred method do not seek substitute method (Daigle, 2005)
 - ✦ May be gender specific, with men in one study substituting w/ overdosing (Reisch, Shuster & Michel, 2007)
 - Consistent with findings that episodes of suicidal ideation are frequently recurrent and short-lived (Rudd; Drum et al., 2009)

Take Home Messages



- Collaborate with media proactively. Educate them about media guidelines before any interviews.
- Establish a point person who is on message with a media goal.
- Environmental interventions are key
- Cross-campus collaboration vital
- Pay attention to the needs of first responders and those who are most impacted
- Put barriers in place before structures are built. This is the best way to prevent suicides.

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