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](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

Gould et al., 2003
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 subbing 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)
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.


