

Lorna Fraser

Samaritans' Media Advisory Service

*Mental health and suicide can be difficult topic areas –
please take time out if you wish.*

Research into media reports of suicide

- 60 years of international research – Werther and Papageno
- Includes qualitative studies –influencing choice of method
- Risk areas include: suicide methods, prominent/excessive coverage, sensationalising/romanticising suicidal behaviour.
- Benefits include: raising awareness, encouraging lifesaving conversations, encouraging help-seeking, profiling local support services and examples of how people can improve their mental health.

BjPsych The British Journal of Psychiatry (2019) 197, 234–243. doi: 10.1192/bjp.199.074633

Role of media reports in completed and prevented suicide: Werther v. Papageno effects

Thomas Niederkrotenthaler, Martin Voracek, Arno Herberth, Benedikt Till, Markus Strauss, Elmar Etzersdorfer, Brigitte Eisenwort and Gernot Sonneck

Background

Media reporting of suicide has repeatedly been shown to trigger suicidal behaviour. Few studies have investigated the associations between specific media content and suicide rates. Even less is known about the possible preventive effects of suicide-related media content.

Aims

To test the hypothesis that certain media content is associated with an increase in suicide, suggesting a so-called Werther effect, and that other content is associated with a decrease in suicide, conceptualised as a Papageno effect. Further, to identify classes of media articles with similar reporting profiles and to test for associations between these classes and suicide.

Method

Content analysis and latent class analysis (LCA) of 497 suicide-related print media reports published in Austria between 1 January and 30 June 2005. Ecological study to identify associations between media item content and short-term changes in suicide rates.

Results

Repetitive reporting of the same suicide and the reporting of suicide myths were positively associated with suicide rates. Coverage of individual suicidal ideation not accompanied by suicidal behaviour was negatively associated with suicide rates. The LCA yielded four classes of media reports, of which the majority of crisis class (articles on individuals who adopted coping strategies other than suicidal behaviour in adverse circumstances) was negatively associated with suicide, whereas the expert opinion class and the epidemiological facts class were positively associated with suicide.

Conclusions

The impact of suicide reporting may not be restricted to harmful effects; rather, coverage of positive coping in adverse circumstances, as covered in media items about suicidal ideation, may have protective effects.

Declaration of interest

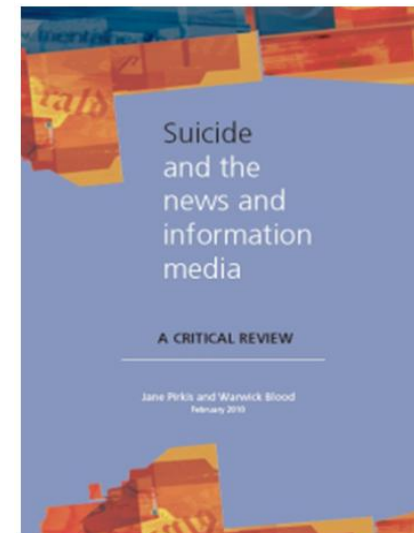
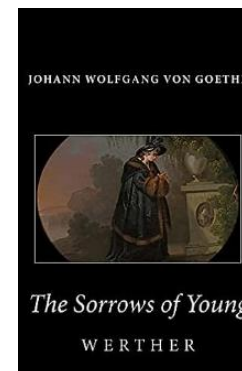
None.



► Aust N Z J Psychiatry. 2007 May;41(5):419–28. doi: 10.1080/00048670701266680.

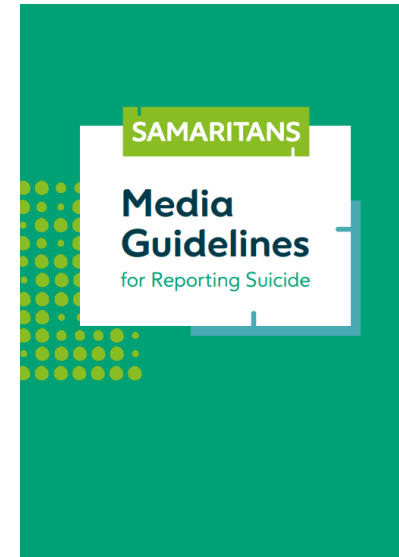
Assessing the impact of media guidelines for reporting on suicides in Austria: interrupted time series analysis

Thomas Niederkrotenthaler¹, Gernot Sonneck



Samaritans' Media Advisory Service

- Media guidelines and resources
- Suicide Prevention Comms guide
- Media advisory service
- Confidential media briefings
- Script review & content advice
- Work with academic experts, regulators/editorial policy, coroners
- Monitor press reporting daily



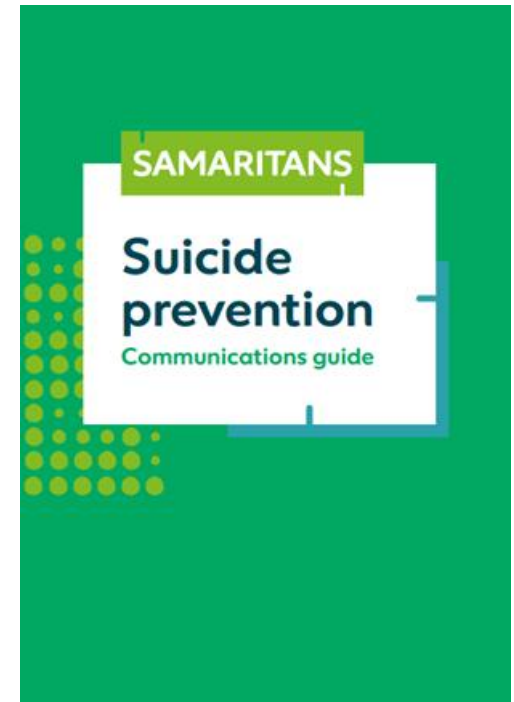
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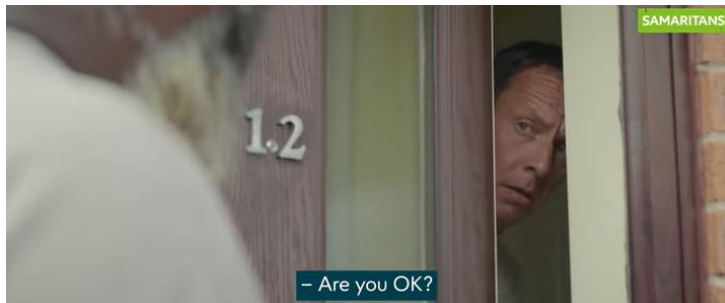
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Top tips for helpful communications

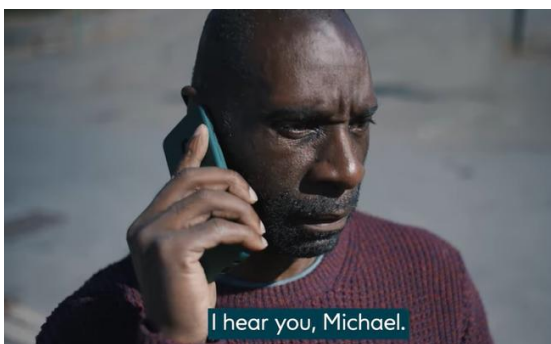
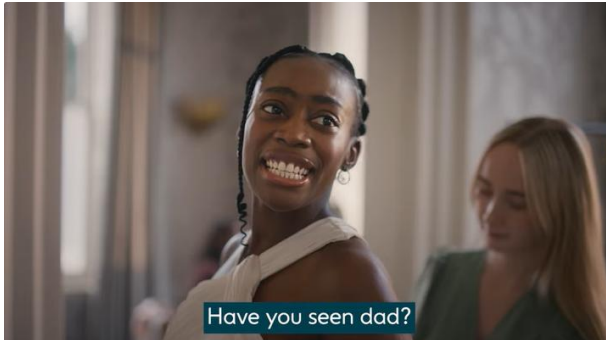
- Stories and messages of hope can have a powerful impact
- A powerful key message is 'Things can change and get better'
- Encourage people to talk and reach out to others
- Always signpost sources of support for people who need it
- Be sensitive when involving people with lived experience
- Avoid details of suicide methods/locations when publishing stories or using imagery
- Use safe and sensitive language
- Use images that represent
- Be prepared for how you will respond to people contacting you on social media
- Take extra care when communicating with young people



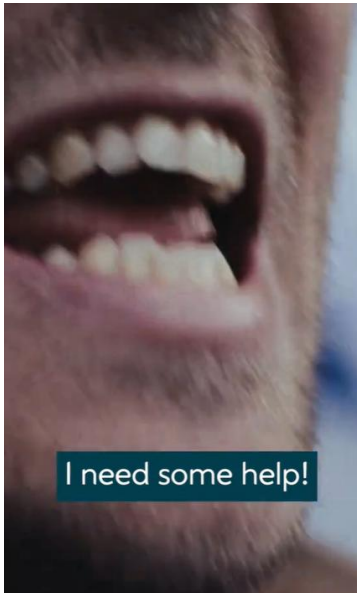
Campaigns – human connection and starting conversations



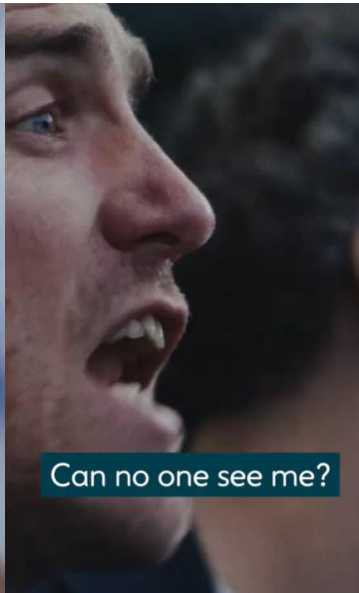
Campaigns - hopeful stories of recovery



Brighton & Hove Albion *Kick off the conversation*



I need some help!



Can no one see me?



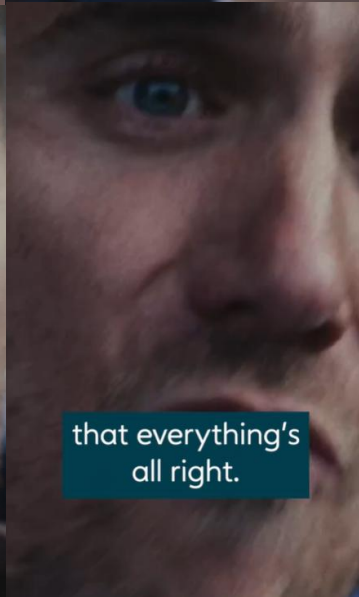
I'm not coping.



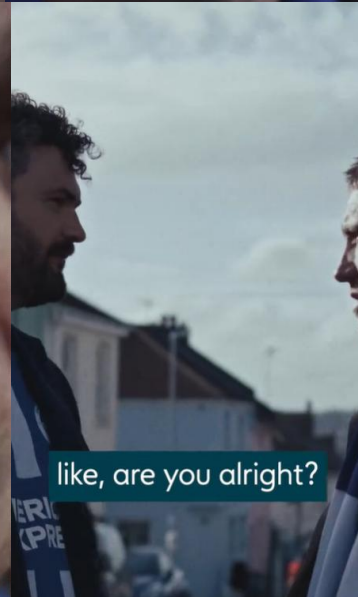
I can't take this.



I'll just keep pretending



that everything's
all right.



like, are you alright?



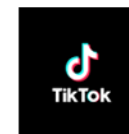
What's up?



SAMARITANS

Samaritans' Online Harms Programme

- Best practice guidelines for industry
- Online harms advisory service
- Research and insight programme exploring what makes content harmful and to whom
- Resources for vulnerable users and people around them
- Influencing policy and practice



Thank you

Thoughts & questions?

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