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EUROPEAN
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OF PSYCHIATRY

Madrid, Spain 12-15 March 2016



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PAPAGENO PROGRAM

When learners collaborate for a safer coverage of suicide



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Supported by



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The risks of an incautious suicide coverage



SUICIDES

USA +12%
GB +10%
LA +45%

The virtues of a responsible suicide coverage

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

Thomas Niederkrönthaler, 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 hypotheses 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 mastery 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.



Evidence suggests that there is an increase in suicides following media reports of suicide, which is frequently referred to as copycat behaviour or as the Werther effect,¹ although the effect size is smaller than for other psychosocial risk factors for suicide.² The risk is thought to depend not only on reader characteristics,³ but also on media content.^{3,5} In order to promote safe media content, the World Health Organization (WHO) and national agencies have developed guidelines for the reporting of suicides.^{2,6} The guidelines list reporting characteristics that may either prevent or trigger suicides, thus serving as educational material for journalists and editors. But most of the recommendations put forth in these guidelines have not yet been empirically tested.⁷ In particular, there is a lack of knowledge about protective reporting characteristics, although the suicide-protective potential of reporting of positive coping in adverse circumstances has been discussed on a theoretical basis.⁸ Specifically, it has been found that media items referring to suicidal ideation are associated with a lower risk of a post-report increase in suicide than other media items.⁴

In the present study, we performed a content analysis of suicide-related media reports. To identify potentially protective and harmful reporting characteristics we tested associations between specific components of media reports, and also classes of reports with similar reporting profiles, and short-term changes in suicide rates. We hypothesised that changes in suicide rates following the publication of media items would vary with the circulation rates of the media items in the population. Based on Papageno's overcoming of a suicidal crisis in Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, we conceptualised any suicide-protective impact of media reporting as a Papageno effect. In Mozart's opera, Papageno becomes suicidal upon learning the loss of his beloved Papagena;

however, he refrains from suicide because of three boys who draw his attention to alternative coping strategies.^{8,9}

Method

Sample of media reports

We obtained all reports from the 11 largest Austrian nationwide newspapers that included the term suicide between 1 January and 30 June 2005 from the Austrian Press Agency. Each of these newspapers has coverage rates exceeding 1% of the population. Articles using 'self-murder' (original search term: *selbstmord*) or 'free death' (*freitod*) were also included, because of their frequent use as German synonyms for suicide. The search yielded 1055 articles. We excluded items that used suicide only as a metaphor ($n=92$), were about suicide bombing ($n=381$), mentioned suicide briefly ($<50\%$ of the article) but were on topics not related to suicide ($n=113$) or were located in the movie or television listings or in the classified advertisements ($n=58$). The final sample comprised 497 items.

Content analysis of media items

Basic item characteristics

Several media reporting characteristics have previously been shown to be associated with an increase in suicides. These characteristics are: quantity of reporting;¹⁰ main focus of the item;⁹ reported suicide method;^{10,12} prominence of the item;¹³ and fictionality of the item.¹⁴ These codes were conceptualised as a code family 'basic item characteristics'. Each of the codes comprised several subcodes that were defined in accordance with

Giving recommendations to journalists...

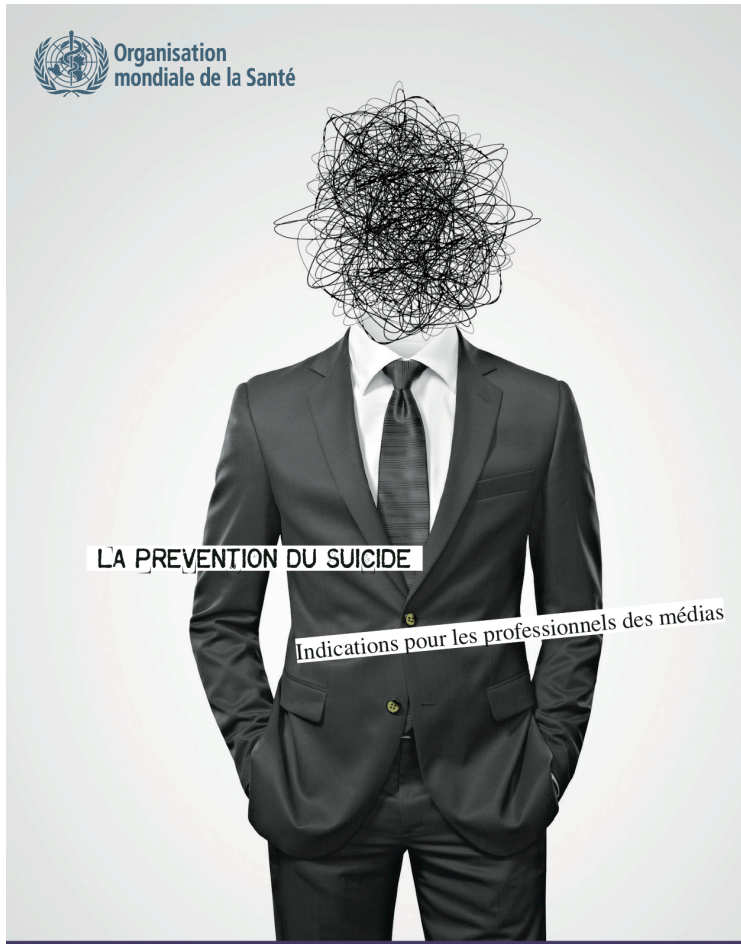


- 1 Take the opportunity to educate the public about suicide
- 2 Avoid language which sensationalizes or normalizes suicide, or presents it as a solution to problems
- 3 Avoid prominent placement and undue repetition of stories about suicide
- 4 Avoid explicit description of the method used in a completed or attempted suicide
- 5 Avoid providing detailed information about the site of a completed or attempted suicide
- 6 Word headlines carefully
- 7 Exercise caution in using photographs or video footage
- 8 Take particular care in reporting celebrity suicides
- 9 Show due consideration for people bereaved by suicide
- 10 Provide information about where to seek help
- 11 Recognize that media professionals themselves may be affected by stories about suicide

Une édition de :



...is not enough



Journalist most often ignore both their responsibility and the existence of the recommendations (Jamieson et al., 2003 ; Colling & Kemp, 2010)

Recommendations need to part and parcel of specific prevention campaigns to be applied (Tatum et al., 2010 ; Fu & Yip, 2011 ; Bohanna & Wang, 2012 ; Chandra et al., 2013 ; Michel et al., 2000 ; Pirkis et al., 2009)

Une édition de :



Resistances

- Frequently solicited
- Suspicious regarding the risk of intrusion
- Staunch defenders of freedom of information
- Confronted to competitive working conditions
- Unaware of Werther and Papageno effects



VS



Papageno program

- **A partnership**



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- **A national program**

- Part of the 2011-2014 French national plan for suicide prevention
- Sensitizing journalism students to suicide
- Efficacy evaluation

Papageno
PROGRAMME

A meeting



Experts

Correct, guide, provide information



Students in journalism

Investigate suicide in its social dimensions



Residents in psychiatry

Unravel myths

+ Werther/Papageno

+ Distribution of the WHO recommendations

- Whose professional identity is under construction
- How are prone to develop new concerns

A collaborative culture

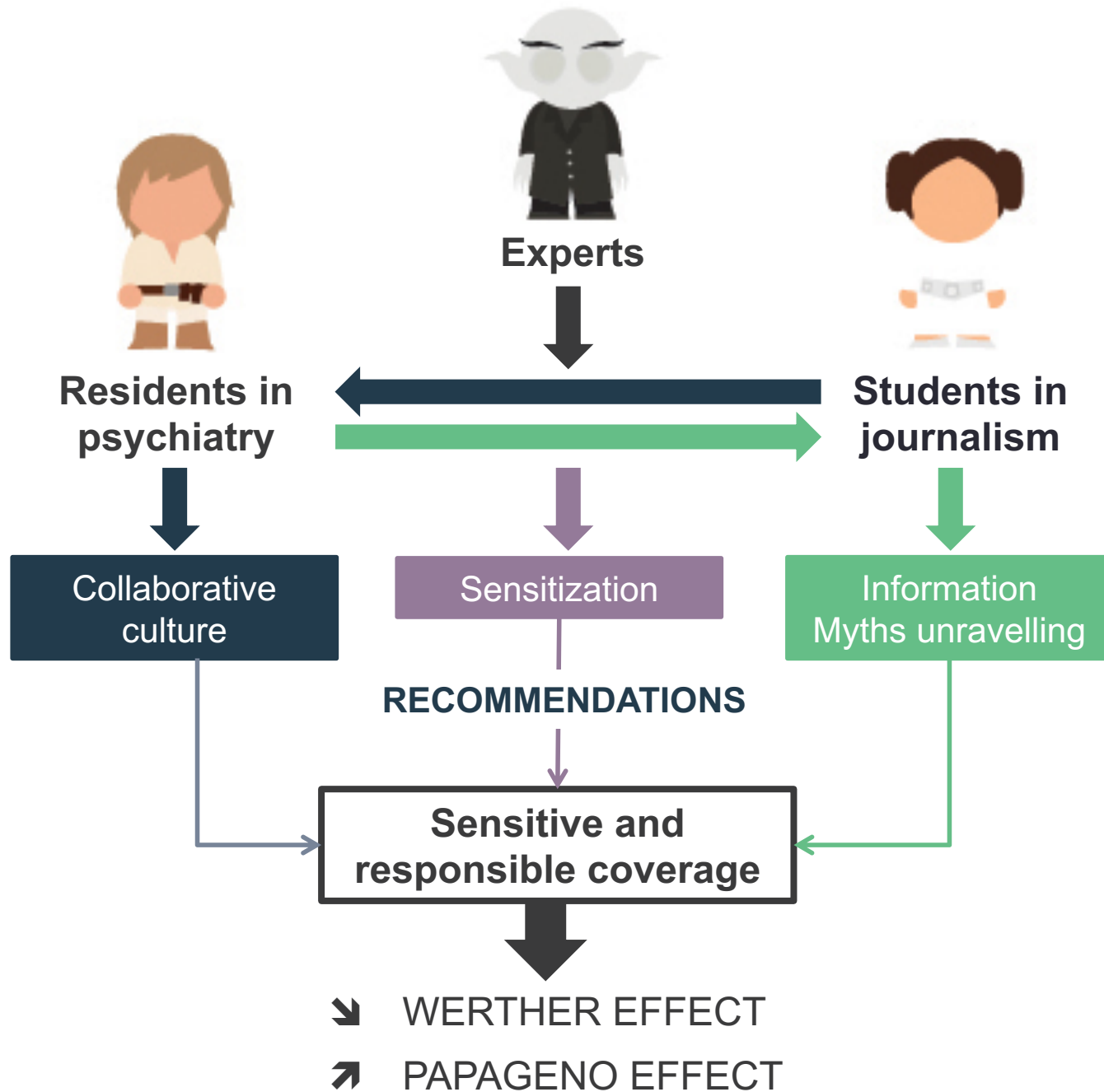
- Internships in psychiatric hospitals
- Theses topics
- Informal meetings
- ...



« Café-psy » + psychiatry & journalism, January 2014



- Maintain the interactions
- Nourish the collaboration
- Fix the representations



Towards a new generation

COLLABORATION

- Aware of reciprocal missions, cultures and constraints
- Aware of shared ethical concerns and matching interests
- Connected through professional networks

SENSITIVITY

- Suicide et mental disorders (the person behind)
- Their media coverage

RESPONSABILITY

- Journalists: limitate the Werther Effet and promote de Papageno Effect
- Psychiatrists: help them

Thank you for your attention



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