



# Team

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# Roadmap

- ❑ Overview of the issue
- ❑ Discussion of past research
- ❑ Review of existing guidelines
- ❑ Examples of current reporting
- ❑ Next steps

# Overview

- ❑ Media reporting about suicide, or specific suicide incidents, may have an effect on suicide rates.
  - **Werther Effect:** A subsequent rise in imitative, or copycat, suicides following a widely publicized suicide.
  - **Papageno Effect:** Any protective effects of media reporting which result in a reduction of suicide rates.

# Past Research

- ❑ Following the suicide of Robert Enke, a German soccer star on the right-of-way, there was a spike in suicides on the German railway.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ These effects were found to be lasting, with an increased suicide rate on the rights-of-way still present 2 years after the initial incident.<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ Rates for other methods of suicide did not change during this time.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ladwig, Kunrath, Lukaschek, & Baumert, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Hegerl, Koburger, Rummel-Kluge, Gravert, Walden, & Mergle, 2012

<sup>3</sup> Hegerl, Mergl, Doganay, Reschke, & Rummel-Kluge, 2013

## Germany goalkeeper Robert Enke in train suicide

Robert Enke, a goalkeeper for the German national football team and club Hanover 96, has been found dead after jumping in front of a train.



Image 1 of 3

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**SPORT FOOTBALL**

Page last updated at 13:21 GMT, Wednesday, 11 November 2009

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### Goalkeeper suicide stuns football

The football world is mourning Germany goalkeeper Robert Enke, who died on Tuesday after being hit by a train.

Enke, 32, was struck by a train at a level crossing near Hanover. He had left a suicide note and had been battling depression since 2003.

Oliver Bierhoff, the German football team's general manager, said: "We are all shocked. We are lost for words."

Germany cancelled a planned training session and all interviews after the death of the Hannover 96 player.

Enke's daughter Lara died aged

**ROBERT ENKE**

- Born:** 24/8/77, Jena, East Germany
- Debut:** 1995-96
- Clubs:** Carl Zeiss Jena, Borussia Monchengladbach, Benfica, Barcelona, Fenerbahce, Tenerife, Hannover 96
- Germany debut:** 27/3/07 versus Denmark **Caps:** 8
- Awards:** Bundesliga goalkeeper

HAMBURGER MORGENPOST

REKORD-NASER AUF DER HAAR  
**280 Sachen statt Tempo 100!**

VON WIESEN GESUNGT  
**Die vier größten Bio-Lügen**

Nationaltorwart Robert Enke tot

**Er warf sich vor den Zug**

Der 32-Jährige litt nach Schicksalsschlägen unter Depressionen +++ DFB-Stars unter Schock

Arthrosamin „Gelenkschutz“

# Past Research

- ❑ Imitative effects are often most closely associated with individuals similar to the initial victim.
  - Germany: Incidents following the Enke suicide were generally male<sup>4</sup>
  - Japan: Imitative impacts are only seen after stories of Japanese victims<sup>5</sup>
- ❑ An agreement to abstain from media reporting of suicides on the Viennese subway in 1987 led to a 75% reduction in suicides on the subway.<sup>6</sup>
- ❑ Reporting may also be helpful, if done correctly. Reports of suicidal ideation *not* accompanied with suicide behavior is associated with reductions in suicide rate.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Hegerl, Mergl, Doganay, Reschke, & Rummel-Kluge, 2013

<sup>5</sup> Stack, 2010

<sup>6</sup> Sonneck, Etzersdorfer, & Nagel-Kraus, 1994

<sup>7</sup> Niederkrotenthaler, Voracek, Herberth, Till, Strauss, Etzersdorfer, Eisenwort, & Sonneck, 2010



# Current Guidelines for Media Reporting

- ❑ Different guidelines available in different countries.
- ❑ In the US, guidelines are available from multiple sources
- ❑ Two examples:
  - [www.reportingonsuicide.org](http://www.reportingonsuicide.org)
  - <http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/sreporting.pdf>

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON SUICIDE®**

Download in collaboration with: American Association of Suicidology, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Public Policy Center, Australian Institute of Family Therapy, Canadian Suicide Studies, University of Calgary, Connecticut, New Zealand, Columbia University, Department of Psychiatry, Connecticut State Police, Division of Forensic Psychiatry, International Association for Suicide Prevention, Iowa Program on Suicide and Suicide, Medical University of Vienna, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Institute of Mental Health, National Press Photographers Association, New York State Psychiatric Institute, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Suicide Prevention Research Center, University of Cambridge, Suicide Prevention Research Center, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Bureau of Public Health, Community Health Sciences.

**IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COVERING SUICIDE**

- More than 50 research studies worldwide have found that certain types of news coverage can increase the likelihood of suicide in vulnerable individuals. The magnitude of the increase is related to the amount, duration and prominence of coverage.
- Risk of additional suicides increases when the story explicitly describes the suicide method, uses dramatic/graphic headlines or images, and repeated/extensive coverage sensationalizes or glamorizes a death.
- Covering suicide carefully, even briefly, can change public misperceptions and correct myths, which can encourage those who are vulnerable or at risk to seek help.

Suicide is a public health issue. Media and online coverage of suicide should be informed by using best practices. Some suicide deaths may be newsworthy. However, the way media cover suicide can influence behavior negatively by contributing to contagion or positively by encouraging help-seeking.

**Suicide Contagion or "Copycat Suicide"**  
occurs when one or more suicides are reported in a way that contributes to another suicide.

References and additional information can be found at: [www.ReportingOnSuicide.org](http://www.ReportingOnSuicide.org).

INSTEAD OF THIS: ❌	DO THIS: ✅
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Big or sensationalistic headlines, or prominent placement (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Used Shotgun to Commit Suicide").</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform the audience without sensationalizing the suicide and minimize prominence (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Dead at 27").</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Including photos/videos of the location or method of death, grieving family, friends, memorials or funerals.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use school/work or family photo; include hotline logo or local crisis phone numbers.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describing recent suicides as an "epidemic," "skyrocketing," or other strong terms.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carefully investigate the most recent CDC data and use non-sensational words like "rise" or "higher."</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describing a suicide as inexplicable or "without warning."</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most, but not all, people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs. Include the "Warning Signs" and "What</li></ul>



# Examples from Current Guidelines for Media Reporting of Suicide

## ❑ AVOID...

- big or sensationalistic headlines;
- prominent placement of the story;
- using the word “suicide” in the headline;
- depictions of location or method of death;
- depictions of grieving family, friends, memorials, or funerals;
- glamorizing the individual or the act of suicide;
- presenting suicide as an unexplainable act;
- dramatized language, such as referring to a rise in suicide rates as an “epidemic” or as “skyrocketing”;
- oversimplifying suicide, such as indicating that it was the result of a single event.

# Examples from Current Guidelines for Media Reporting of Suicide

## ❑ Instead of:

- “committed suicide” ----->
- “successful suicide” ----->
- “unsuccessful” or “failed” attempt ----->
- “epidemic” ----->
- “X left a suicide note saying...” ----->

## ❑ Use:

- “having died by suicide”
- “suicide death”
- “non-fatal attempt”
- “rise”
- “A note from the deceased was found and is being reviewed by the coroner/medical examiner.”

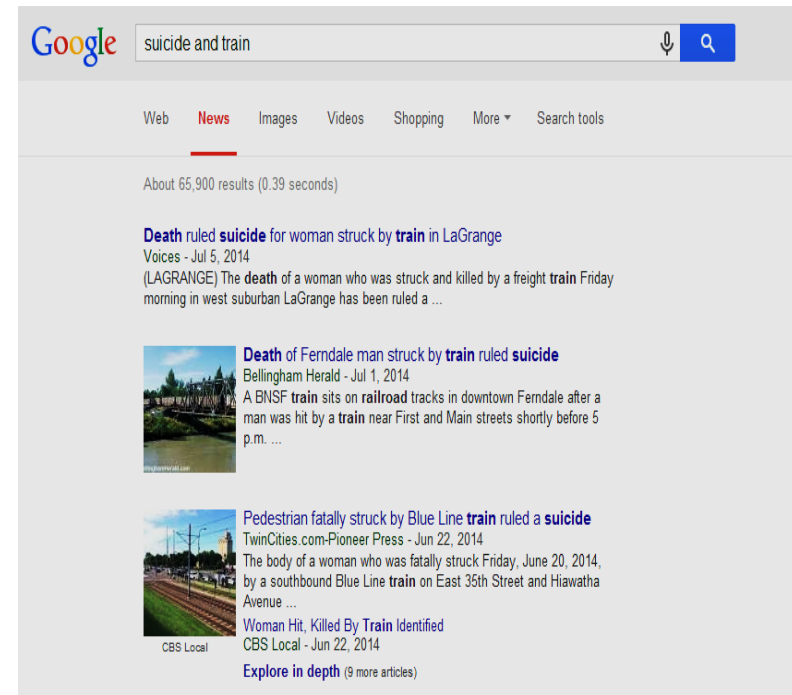
# Examples from Current Guidelines for Media Reporting of Suicide

## □ *When possible, TRY TO...*

- quote suicide prevention expert about causes or treatments;
- inform readers about the causes of suicide, warning signs, or treatment options;
- add statements about treatment options available and stories of those who overcame suicidal crisis;
- Include up-to-date local or national resources where readers can find treatment, information and advice that promotes help-seeking.

# Volpe Media Research – Ongoing

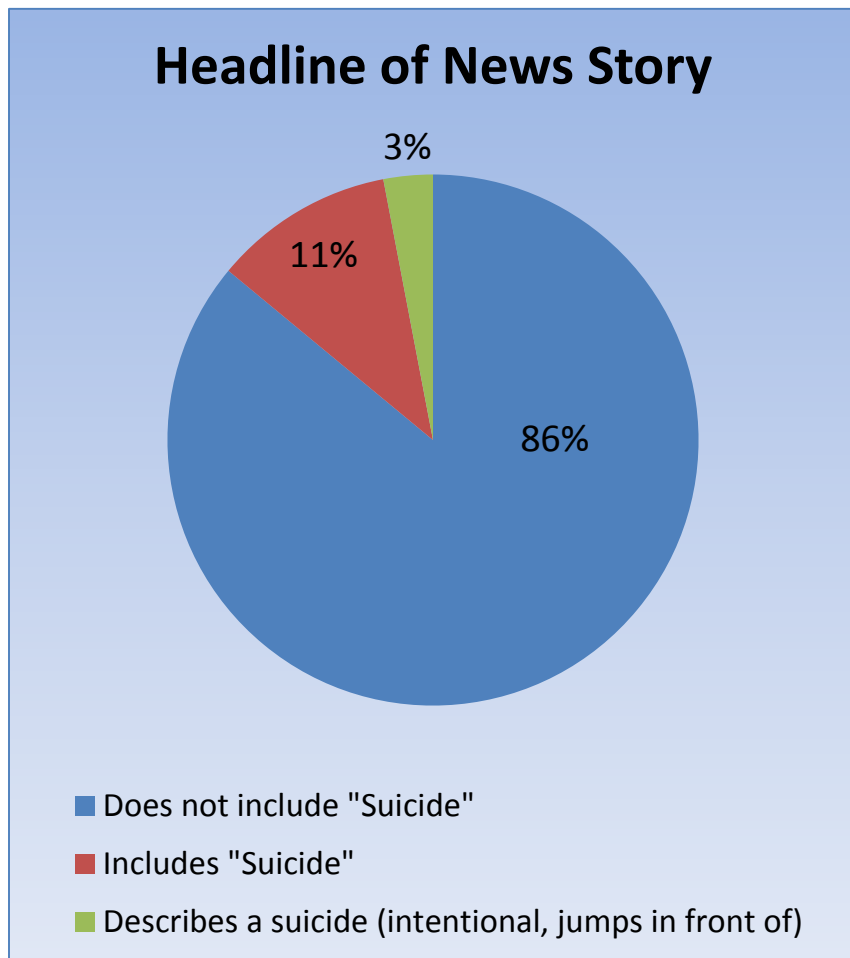
- ❑ Google News search for key words daily for one year
- ❑ Collected only reports from US
- ❑ Coded reports on various metrics:
  - Headline
  - Images
  - Wording in article body
  - Where published
  - Written by whom
  - Number of articles on same event
  - Etc.



# Volpe Media Research - Ongoing

- ❑ **Preliminary** findings: March 2014
  - 76 unique incidents identified (both suicide and trespass)
  - 132 total articles written
  
- ❑ Examples of Four media guidelines:
  - Using the word “suicide” in the headline
  - Try not to include photographs with the news story
  - Avoid using sensationalistic language
  - Include up-to-date local/national resources where readers/viewers can find treatment, information and advice that promotes help-seeking (suicide prevention information)

# “Suicide” in the Headline



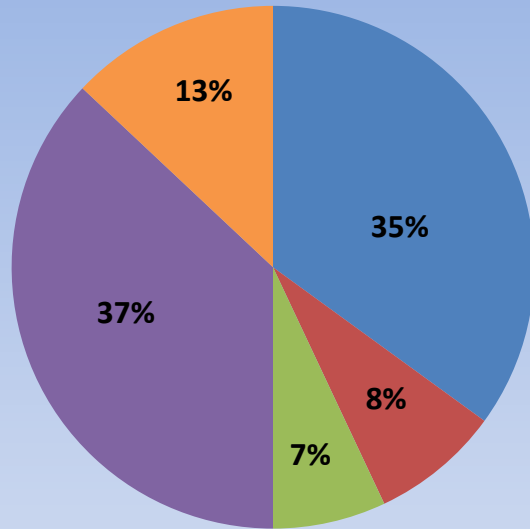
**“New York financial worker jumps in front of train. Why are traders (literally) killing themselves?”**

**“Texas teen killed by train in suspected suicide posted goodbye on Instagram hours before”**

**“Woman hit by a train may have committed suicide, police say”**

**“Decatur Police: Man Stepped In Front of Train Intentionally”**

# Photographs with Report



- No Photo
- Photo of Individual
- Photo of map/location
- Photo of train/tracks
- Photo of emergency responder





# Sensationalistic Language

## □ Examples:

**55** comments  
**Man lays head on train tracks, killed instantly in Paterson, NJ Transit says**

**EXCLUSIVE BUSINESS**



## Trader kills self in finance world's latest suicide

March 12, 2014 | 5:45pm



A Long Island Rail Road train pulls into the Jamaica station. A Manhattan trader committed suicide by leaping in front of a different train near Syosset Tuesday.

“It’s a fatality 99.9 times out of a hundred.”

## Texas teen killed by train in suspected suicide posted goodbye on Instagram hours before

Fort Worth teen [redacted] who died in a suspected suicide Thursday night, posted a black-and-white photo of herself smiling with a message reading, 'I love all of y'all. Never forget it!'

## Grandparents Killed By Train Ruled Murder-Suicide

## New Jersey Train Accident Kills Man In New Brunswick, 3 Hurt By Flying Body Parts

# Suicide Prevention Information

- ❑ Information about suicide included in 1 of 132 news stories
  
- ❑ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention ([www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org))
  - Risk Factors and Warning Signs
  - Treatment Options
  - Education and Prevention Programs
  - Facts and Figures
  
- ❑ If in crisis, call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** – *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*

# Next Steps

- ❑ Look at FRA suicide/trespass data and compare events
- ❑ Analyze 12 months worth of data (July 2013-July 2014)
- ❑ Recommendations for media guidelines when reporting fatalities on the right-of-way
  - For the railroad
  - For the media