

Commentary

MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON SUICIDE: BUILDING A SAFER ONLINE WORLD FOR ALL: A COMMENTARY

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Description

The article underscores the critical role of the media, particularly social media, in suicide prevention efforts and proposes comprehensive guidelines for leveraging these platforms effectively. It begins by acknowledging the World Health Organization's (WHO) initiative in 1999, which aimed to educate various societal groups, including the media, about suicide prevention. It highlights the significant influence of media reporting on suicide and emphasizes the importance of adhering to established reporting guidelines to mitigate the risk of suicide contagion. However, the article notes that these guidelines were formulated in 2000 and do not fully account for the rise of social media, which has drastically reshaped the communication landscape. Given the alarming incidence of suicides, the article argues for the institution of guidelines specifically tailored to social media platforms. These guidelines would focus on disseminating educational content while removing harmful material, thereby combatting the risks associated with suicide contagion and providing support to vulnerable individuals. The proposed guidelines include several key recommendations. Firstly, social media platforms should periodically disseminate suicide prevention content to their users, providing guidance on accessing mental health support services and crisis helplines. Secondly, platforms should employ artificial intelligence systems to proactively identify and remove content that may increase the risk of suicide, such as information on suicide methods or online suicide pacts. Policies for content moderation should balance the need to eliminate hazardous information with respect for user privacy. Additionally, the article highlights the role of social media platforms in addressing cyberbullying and harassment, which are significant risk factors for youth suicide. Platforms should detect harassing content and impose appropriate consequences on

those responsible. Moreover, social media influencers should adhere to reporting standards established by the WHO, which caution against sensationalizing suicides and provide guidance on using evidence-based terminology. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the importance of targeted educational efforts to reduce medication accessibility for individuals in vulnerable situations and encourages the pairing of reports on mental illness or suicide with supportive messages. It suggests drawing guidance from existing toolkits developed in countries like Australia and the UK for media support in adopting reporting guidelines. The article concludes by stressing the pivotal role of social media platforms in implementing an integrated strategy for preventing suicide. It advocates for ongoing dialogue between public health experts and social media platforms to develop effective policies and procedures for identifying and removing harmful content. Additionally, it highlights the potential of social media platforms to promote effective coping strategies and pathways for at-risk individuals to seek assistance.

In summary, the article provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities associated with leveraging social media for suicide prevention. It underscores the importance of tailored guidelines and proactive measures to combat the dissemination of harmful content while promoting support and education on mental health issues. The article also stresses the necessity of continuous evaluation and adaptation of these guidelines to keep pace with evolving online communication trends and emerging threats. It suggests collaborative efforts between mental health professionals, technology experts, and policymakers to develop innovative strategies for leveraging social media as a tool for suicide prevention. By fostering a supportive online environment and harnessing the potential of social media platforms to reach

vulnerable populations, a concerted effort can be made to reduce suicide rates and promote mental well-being in the digital age

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