



PANEL: Moving from Awareness to Behavior Change: Changing the Conversation about Suicide

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- **Introduction: Rethinking suicide prevention communications based on current research**
Linda Langford
- **Messaging about suicide prevention in a large California county: It's Up To Us**
Anara Guard
- **Promoting help seeking to Veterans: An examination of the VA's Veterans Crisis Line campaign**
Elizabeth Karras, Robert Bossarte, Janet Kemp
- **Evidence matters when creating online campaigns**
Ashley Womble



Introduction: Rethinking suicide prevention communications based on current research

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Linda Langford, Sc.D.
llangford@edc.org
@LindaLangford




Presenter Disclosures

Linda Langford

(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose

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A Look Back: 2001

OLD National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (NSSP): Two Prongs

- **Goal 1**
Promote awareness that suicide is a public health problem that is preventable.
→ Public messaging
- **Goal 9**
Improve reporting and portrayals of suicidal behavior, mental illness, and substance abuse in the entertainment and news media.
→ News/entertainment media

Public perceptions about suicide

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More Attention Needed: Public Messaging

Public Messaging is Defined Broadly

- Any information released into the public domain
- Campaigns, and ALSO tweets, newsletters, websites, event publicity, advocacy materials, etc.
- Does **not** include
 - Clinical interactions
 - Private conversations
 - One-on-one conversations with legislators
 - Talking in support groups or other therapeutic settings
 - Training for professional audiences, e.g. clinicians

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WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- See overview in AJPH paper on messaging about military/veteran suicide (Langford, Litts, Pearson, 2013)
- Bibliography & resource list are posted on APHA site

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Media Coverage Can Increase Suicide Risk in Vulnerable Individuals ("Contagion")

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"Don'ts" for Public Messaging

DON'T...

- ...provide details about method/location
- ...focus on personal details
- ...glorify or romanticize suicide
- ..."normalize" by portraying suicide as common, acceptable
- ...use data/language suggesting suicide is inevitable, unsolvable
- ... present suicide as inexplicable or resulting from a single cause (e.g. stress, job loss, being bullied)

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Literature on Effective Communications Campaigns





- Systematically **planned**
 - Research-based
- Tied to **overall strategy**
- Defined audience and goals**
 - Clear, focused message; specific call to action
- Informed by **audience research** and **pre-testing**
- Appropriate channels** and sufficient **exposure**
- Evaluated**

-- Making Health Communication Campaigns Work; Abroms & Maibach; Noar; Goodman; Chambers et al. 8

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Research: Suicide/MH Campaigns

- "Mental health literacy" campaigns:
 - Can improve knowledge/attitudes e.g., recognition of depression
 - Limited change in help-seeking when used alone
 - Better results with **media + other components**
- Suicide prevention
 - Some evidence that promoting hotline numbers can increase calls.

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Stigma Reduction

Stigma is Multi-Faceted – specify which aspect you're addressing

- Stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination
- Public stigma, self-stigma, label avoidance

-- e.g., Corrigan, 2004

What Works? What Doesn't Work?

- "Putting bits of factual information out into the public domain is not an effective way to fight against stigma/discrimination."
- "Campaigns tend to make more sense when tied to specific goals..."
- "Promoting positive messages about consumers' real lives outside of their illnesses helps reduce stigma/discrimination."

-- Roundtable Session on Stigma in Mental Health & Addiction; Mental Health Commission of Canada & Hotchkiss Brain Institute, 2008

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Also, Various Guidelines Exist (Not All Specific To Suicide)

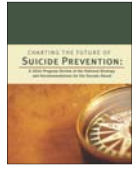
<p>Messengers</p> <p><i>Best Practices for Survivor/Attempt Stories</i></p>	<p>Goals</p> <p>Stigma Reduction</p>
<p>Channels</p> <p>AAS Video Guidelines Working with the Media</p> <p><i>Creating Your Organization's Social Media Strategy Map</i></p>	<p>Populations</p> <p><i>Talking About Suicide & LGBT Populations</i></p> <p>And more!</p>

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NEED FOR A CHANGE IN SUICIDE PREVENTION MESSAGING

Data Sources

- Charting the Future* (2010): Progress review of the 2001 NSSP
- Public opinion surveys
- Expert Panel, January, 2013



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Safety Guidelines Not Always Followed in Public Messaging

- *Charting the Future* message content review (sampling)
 - **Some** generally consistent with **suicide prevention goals**
 - Promote help-seeking, list available resources
 - However, also found **concerning content**, e.g.
 - “Normalizing” statistics and language

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Few Messages Developed Using Communications Best Practices

- *Charting the Future*
 - Lack of systematic planning or clear goals
 - Not targeted; no audience testing
 - Messages “stand alone”
 - Little evaluation
- Reflected in 2012 Revised National Strategy
Goal 1 is now Goal 2
Goal 2. Implement research-informed communication efforts designed to prevent suicide by changing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

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Public “Awareness” is Relatively High; Less Clear How to Take Action

- **National poll** (2006, Research!America):
 - 78% many suicides are preventable
 - 86% important to invest in suicide prevention
- **Kentucky phone survey**, 2008
 - 79% everyone should have a role in preventing suicide
 - **37% had heard of the Lifeline** (1-800-273-TALK)
- **California phone survey**, 2011
 - 67% suicide is a problem in CA (14% neutral)
 - **46% knew of a crisis line number** (10% neutral)

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Messages Could Promote Prevention More Effectively

(Expert Panel)

- Emphasis on problem severity, not prevention
 - Collectively, creating a “negative narrative” about suicide
- Too few stories of hope, recovery, resilience
 - Stories of suicide deaths are common
 - Protective: news stories about coping with adversity without suicidal behavior (Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2010)
- The field lacks a core message or frame
 - We can be more proactive in shaping the conversation

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EVERY 40 SECONDS 1 PERSON COMMITTS SUICIDE SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

Violates safety guidelines

Emphasis on problem severity

Rising Toll of Depression Measured in Disability, Death and Dollars.
 Landmark Mental Health Report Finds

- Patient advocacy group offers concrete measures to help America overcome devastating illness -

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{SUICIDE} IS 100% PREVENTABLE

SPEAK UP REACH OUT

Calls to action absent or vague
 -*Charting the Future*

Prevent suicide. Treat depression. See your doctor.


Often not integrated with programmatic efforts, e.g. clinical training

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★ Note: not an actual brochure.

SUICIDE AWARENESS FOR MEN

Depression isn't a normal part of getting older...



There is hope & help.

FAST FACTS

- Over **38,000** people in the United States die by suicide every year.
- There are **4** male suicides for every female suicide.
- Over **60** percent of all people who die by suicide suffer from major depression.
- An estimated **1 in 10** U.S. adults report depression.
- The average age of depression onset is **32**.

A vast majority of men have visited a physician a short time before their suicide.




Language & Framing: Match to Goals & Audience

Expert panel: Sometimes, may be more appropriate NOT to use mental health terms or "suicide."




Campaign examples do exist:

- Tailored for particular audiences & goals
- Research/theory-based
- Safe; convey actions, recovery, hope

- Caveats**
 - Check for evaluation data
 - Shouldn't be uncritically adopted

Remainder of Today's Session: Three Campaigns

But first....sneak peek!

NATIONAL ACTION ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION
FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESSFUL MESSAGING

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention: One Initial Priority (of Four)

Change the public conversation around suicide and suicide prevention.

"Leverage the media and national leaders to change the national narratives around suicide and suicide prevention to ones that promote hope, connectedness, social support, resilience, treatment and recovery."

Media/Entertainment Outreach (Journalists, Writers)

Public Messaging (Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Professionals & Other Messengers)

Action Alliance Framework for Successful Messaging



Coming Soon!

www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org