Motor vehicle suicide: Information from confirmed cases, Queensland, 1990 to 2007

Author
Milner, Allison, De Leo, Diego, Sveticic, Jerneja

Published
2010

Conference Title
4th Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the International Association for Suicide Prevention

Copyright Statement
Copyright remains with the authors 2010. The attached file is reproduced here in accordance with the copyright policy of the publisher. For information about this conference please refer to the conference's website or contact the authors.

Downloaded from
http://hdl.handle.net/10072/37268

Link to published version
http://www.iasp.info/congresses.php
Car suicides: information from confirmed cases, Queensland, 1990 to 2007.

Allison MILNER¹, Jerneja SVETICIC¹ and Diego DE LEO¹

Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention, Griffith University, Brisbane, QLD, AUSTRALIA

Around the world, a substantial proportion of car-crashes are recognised as ‘hidden’ suicides. A possible explanation for why some suicide victims choose this method is that it can be used to mask their suicidal intent. Consequently, one of problems with car-suicides is that cases can be easily mistaken as accidents. This presentation seeks to progress understandings of those who used a car to suicide, by drawing on information from over 40 confirmed cases. Data for the project is derived from the Queensland Suicide Register, which contains information from Psychological Autopsies with next-of-kin, as well as police, toxicology and post-mortem reports. Analysis focused on life circumstances and events preceding the death, physical and mental illnesses, past suicidality, and indication of suicide ‘intent’ (e.g., suicide notes or statements). Results showed that a large proportion of car suicides experienced a number of life events immediately prior to the death, including relationship conflict, legal or criminal issues, and financial problems. A substantial number of suicide cases also reported current or past treatment for mental illness. These exploratory results indicate the need to improve the recording systems of car suicides. A checklist, or ‘grid’, of risk factors for police and ambulance officers is proposed as one method through which the identification and recording of car-suicides can be improved.