Reviewer’s report

Title: Reduction in young male suicide rates in Scotland

Version: 2 Date: 26 August 2007

Reviewer: Gernot Sonneck

Reviewer’s report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Review “Reduction in Young Male Suicide in Scotland”

Major compulsory revisions

I.

In the study a significant reduction in suicide rates in male 15-29 years old and a corresponding reduction in the suicide method of hanging was found between 2000 and 2004.

The authors state that the reasons for a reduction of suicide rates in younger males are not clear.

However, a national suicide prevention program which started in 2001 had a special focus on that age group, and the authors report that a joinpoint regression yielded a significant trend change afterwards.

We suggest that the authors explain in more detail,

*how they tried to address their target group in the interventions and
*if there were other detectable changes in suicide preventive activities in Scotland in the time period, which could have led to a reduction of suicides.

We propose that the interventions made in the program should be the focus of the paper.

The interventions should already be explained in the “background” and “methods” section,
not only in the discussion.

An ecological study cannot proof a causal relationship but can increase the plausibility of the hypothesis that there was an effect of an intervention.

A significant reduction of suicide rates does not contradict the hypothesis of efficiency, for that reason the way you realized your interventions could have
important implications for similar suicide preventive efforts in other countries.

The authors further report that a method switch to less lethal methods cannot be excluded.

However, even if there had been a switch, which does not seem very probable in the light of existing literature, a reduction of overall suicides and of more lethal methods like hanging is a primary aim of suicide prevention.

II.

Fig. 1 (page 6, link to page 20): Figure does not visualize data in text.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare I have no competing interests