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Submission from 'contact us' form:

Prof Louis Appleby

I lead a large suicide prevention research unit at the University of Manchester. I also chair the Government's advisory group on the national suicide prevention strategy. One of 6 aims in the strategy is to work with the media to encourage sensitive reporting of suicide, in order to discourage imitative suicides. Sensitive reporting is also part of suicide prevention guidance from the World Health Organisation.

I fully support the submission to this consultation from Samaritans. They have an excellent track record of working constructively with the press on this issue. Their submission refers to the media guidance they have published - this is an invaluable document on the subject. Samaritans stress in their submission the need to (1) avoid details of suicide method in reporting a death - the current code refers only to "excessive detail" (2) avoid details of any new or especially lethal method (3) avoid extensive, sensational or speculative coverage of a death, especially in the case of a celebrity (4) avoid signposting to online sites where suicide may be encouraged (5) include information on where to find help.

My impression is that in most cases the press aim to report suicide responsibly. However, there have been recent instances where this has not been the case and I believe a more explicit Code of Practice, covering the points listed above, would help protect people at risk.