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Is postvention research the 'poor relation' of suicidology?

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Is postvention research the 'poor relation' of suicidology?

John Whitebrook



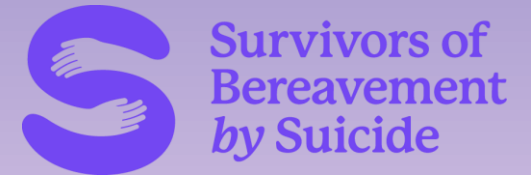
Alex Whitebrook

03-Feb-1991 ~ 01-May-2017



UNIVERSITY OF
WEST LONDON

9th Suicide & Self-Harm Early and Mid-
Career Researchers' Forum (EMCRF25)



**Survivors of
Bereavement
by Suicide**

The Bereaved by Suicide – Who?

- ❑ Exposed¹:
 - Knew or identify with someone who dies by suicide.
- ❑ Affected¹:
 - Experience psychological distress as a result of a suicide.
- ❑ Bereaved¹:
 - Close personal relationship to someone who dies by suicide.
- ❑ Suicide Loss Survivor (SLS)²:
 - Term increasingly used for those who have experienced the suicide of a close family member, or a friend, and face persistent distress.
 - Differentiates from survivors of suicide attempts.

The Bereaved by Suicide – How Many?



- ❑ The annual, global suicide rate is minimally of the order of c. 700k^{3,4}.
- ❑ “*How Many People Are Exposed to Suicide? Not Six*”⁵:
 - Oft quoted number that 135 people are *exposed* per suicide.
 - Implies c. 94.5 million people are *exposed* per year.
- ❑ Other estimates put the *exposure* rate at 48 – 500 million per year with 60 people per suicide being *intimately affected*⁶:
 - Implies 42 million people *bereaved* by suicide per year.
- Regardless of the literature source, it's...

...A BIG NUMBER!

The Bereaved by Suicide – Postvention



Postvention is prevention — The case for suicide postvention

(Jordan, 2017⁹):

"...convincing empirical evidence that exposure to suicide increases the risk of subsequent suicide..."

"...substantial evidence base makes the compelling case that all suicide prevention programs need to include postvention services as a direct form of suicide prevention..."

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□ Postvention

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The Bereaved by Suicide – Publications¹⁰



- ❑ Modest number of articles on postvention.
- ❑ Majority via two publications sponsored by organisations with remits covering SLS support and postvention research:
 - *Crisis, The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*
 - *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*
- ❑ Understanding of suicide bereavement and postvention could benefit from:
 - Development of consensual definitions.
 - Theory-driven research.
 - Involvement of SLS in the research process.

The Bereaved by Suicide - Conferences



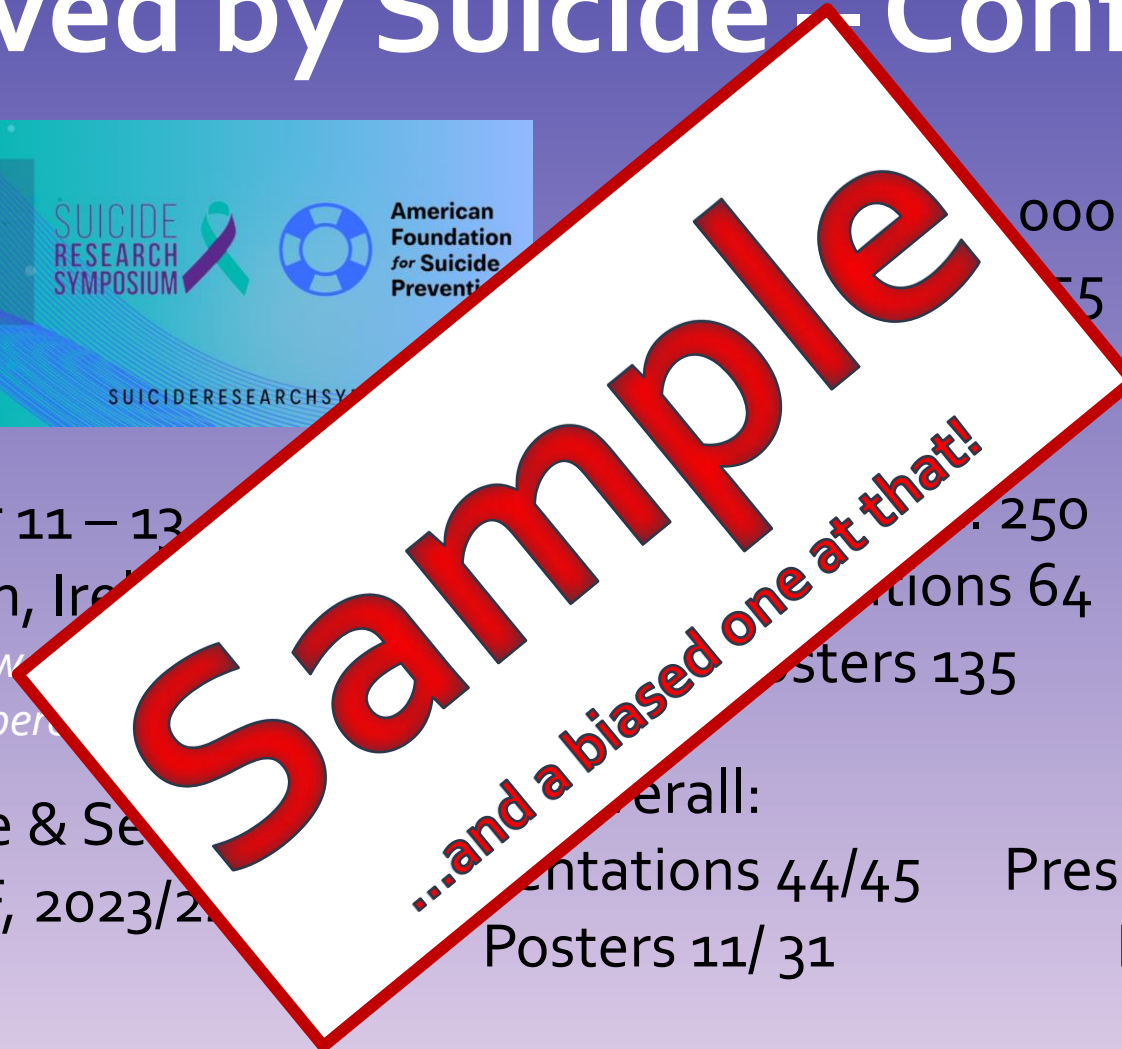
November 11 – 13

Dublin, Ireland

"...especially with
on suicide bereavement"

7/8th Suicide & Self-Harm

EMCRF, 2023/24



1000

Bereavement focus:

Presentations 2* (1.3%)

Posters 2 (1.4%)

1250

Suicide focus:

Presentations 9 (14.1%)

Posters 15* (11.1%)

135

Overall:

Bereavement focus:

Presentations 3*/2 (6.8/4.4%)

Posters 0/1* (0/3.2%)

Presentations 44/45

Posters 11/ 31

Based on program review – directional not absolute (*Whitebrook involvement!)

The Bereaved by Suicide – Research Asks



- ❑ Keep doing what you're doing and facilitate lower rates!
- ❑ Look for ways to integrate postvention research into your programs:
 - SLS often interviewed (autopsies) to help determine suicide drivers – opportunity to learn about their lived experience as SLS
 - Always be aware that '*postvention is prevention*'
- ❑ Research often focussed on stigma and/or support needs (incl. mine!):
 - Ask SLS what they want to understand more about
 - More focus on post-traumatic growth and positivity?
- ❑ More collaboration with charities e.g. SoBS, HUGG in Ireland (UCC)
- ❑ Do more (some?) research into the impact of bereavement by suicide!

Thank You



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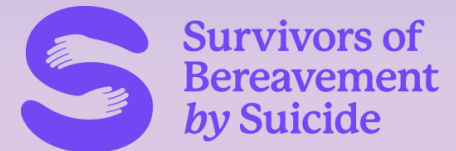
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