

## **Appendix 1 (as supplied by the authors): Supplementary Methods:**

### **A. Suicide search string for Infomart database:**

suicide OR suicidal OR "killed himself" OR "killed herself" OR "kill himself" OR "kill herself" OR "hung himself" OR "hung herself" OR "took his life" OR "took her life" OR "take his life" OR "take her life" OR "end his own life" OR "end her own life" OR "ended his own life" OR "ended her own life" OR "end his life" OR "end her life" OR "ended his life" OR "ended her life" OR "ends his life" OR "ends her life"

### **B. Article Characteristics Abstracted**

#### 1. general content

a. age focus: youth <25, adults 25-64, elderly ≥65;

b. gender focus: male, female;

c. suicide focus: suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, suicide death;

d. article type: information about a specific person's suicide/suicidality, suicide research, suicide public policy, assisted death, individual-murder suicide, mass-murder suicide, suicide pact, legal issues related to suicide, suicide as institutional protest, opinion column, advice column, suicide in fiction)

#### 2. putatively harmful elements

a. mention of suicide method: headline, text;

- b. specific method mentioned: hanging, self-poisoning, jumping – building or bridge, railway, asphyxia by car exhaust, other asphyxia – e.g. using a plastic bag, firearm, cutting/stabbing, drowning, burning/electrocution, “suicide by cop”, assisted, other;
  - c. details of how the specific method was carried out;
  - d. accompanying photos: of the deceased, of someone looking sad;
  - e. value judgment about the deceased: favorable or unfavorable characteristic;
  - f. identifies the deceased as a celebrity including entertainers, athletes, politicians and other public figures;
  - g. a statement that suicide is inevitable;
  - h. exciting reporting; glorified/romanticized reasons for the suicide;
  - i. a monocausal explanation for the suicide;
  - j. a statement of approval of the suicide;
  - k. interviews with the bereaved)
3. putatively protective elements
- a. alternatives to suicide such as seeking treatment;
  - b. community resources for people contemplating suicide;
  - c. example of a positive outcome of a suicidal crisis such as calling a suicide hotline;
  - d. warning signs of suicidal behavior;

e. how to approach someone considering suicide;

f. a message of hope that suicidal thoughts and/or behavior are treatable).

### C. Data Dictionary

Publication Name	Name of the journal/magazine/website in which the article appears	i.e. The Globe and Mail, National Post, thestar.com, nationalpost.com, etc
Publication_Type_Print	The publication is in print form. Multiple responses allowed as the publication may appear in paper as well as online.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Publication_Type_Online	The publication is in online form. Multiple responses allowed as the publication may appear online as well as in paper.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Special_Item_Type_Opinion_Piece	An editorial article	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Special_Item_Type_Advice_Column	“Dear Abby”, “Ask Amy”, “Ellie Advice” or similar.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Special_Item_Type_Fictional	Describes fictional content related to suicide.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Mentions_Suicidal_Thoughts	Talks about how often people think about suicide or a person’s experience contemplating suicide	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Mentions_Suicide_Attempt	Talks about a specific suicide attempt(s) or suicide attempt statistics.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. “8% of young people attempt suicide..”

Item_Mentions_Suicide_Death	Talks about a specific suicide death(s) or suicide death statistics.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e.
MAJOR FOCUS ITEMS	To be a major focus, this topic must be the subject of the article or take up a significant amount of the article – as defined in contrast to a minor focus in which something is mentioned in only 1-2 sentences or a small paragraph (multiple responses/major focuses allowed).	
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Specific person's death/suicidality	Describes a specific person's/multiple people's experience with suicidal thoughts/attempt/death.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e.
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Suicide_Statistics	The item provides suicide related statistics.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. "Men between the ages of 50-54 have the highest rate of suicide among all Canadians — 24.2 per 100,000 people in 2011, compared to 9.1 for women of the same age..."
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Suicide_Research	The item describes suicide research.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. "Suicide is contagious among young people, new Canadian research shows..."
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Suicide_Policy_Programs	The publication describes policy measures or programs designed to prevent suicide such as policies that prevent bullying, putting barriers up on bridges, or even a	0 = No, 1 = Yes

	Canada-wide suicide prevention plan.	
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Assisted_Death	The item discusses assisted suicide.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Murder_Suicide_Individual	The item describes a murder suicide. This category should also be used for attempted murder suicide such as an article where a student shot other students who, for example, were sent to hospital and he then killed himself.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. “The mother of a 3-year-old thrown to his death from a 52-story apartment building said the father killed the boy - and then himself...”
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Murder_Suicide_Mass	The item describes a mass murder suicide.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Multiple_Suicide_Mass	The item describes a multiple mass murder suicide.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Multiple_Suicide_Pact	The item describes a suicide pact.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Major_Focus_Legal_Issues	The item describes legal issues related to suicide such as a lawsuit or complaint arising from someone’s suicide death or a law being implemented in order to prevent suicide or its causes (e.g. a law to stop bullying or a gun law designed to prevent mentally ill people from having access to guns)	0 = No, 1 = Yes
MINOR FOCUS ITEMS	Definitions the same as major focus except the topic is mentioned in only 1-2 sentences or a small paragraph. (multiple responses/minor focuses allowed)	
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Specific person’s death/suicidality	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes

Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Suicide_Statistics	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Suicide_Research	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Suicide_Policy_Programs	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Assisted_Death	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Murder_Suicide_Individual	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Murder_Suicide_Mass	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Multiple_Suicide_Mass	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Multiple_Suicide_Pact	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Type_Minor_Focus_Legal_Issues	Same definition as major focus.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Age_Focus (Major and Minor)	Multiple Responses are allowed for both Major and Minor. The distinction is that an article on prevention of teen suicide that has a paragraph on a 40 year old's death would be teen (major) and adult (minor)	
Major_Item_Age_Focus_Teen_Youth	If the publication's content has a large focus on the <25 age group	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Major_Item_Age_Focus_Adult	If the publication's content has a large focus on the 25-65 age group	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Major_Item_Age_Focus_Elderly	If the publication's content has a large focus on the >65 age group	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Minor_Item_Age_Focus_Teen_Youth	If there is mention of suicide in the <25 age group and/or there is mention of 'youth',	0 = No, 1 = Yes

	'child/children', 'teen(s)' and/or 'adolescent(s)'	
Minor_Item_Age_Focus_Adult	If there is mention of suicide in the 25-65 age group and/or there is mention of 'adult(s)'	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Minor_Item_Age_Focus_Elderly	If there is mention of suicide in the >65 age group and/or there is mention of the 'elderly', 'senior(s)', etc.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_Gender_Focus (Male or Female)	Does the article mention suicidal thoughts/attempts/deaths in boys/males or girls/females or in a specific man or woman. Multiple responses allowed.	Male 0 = No, 1 = Yes Female 0 = No, 1 = Yes An article stating "2,000 men died if suicide in Canada in 2011" and "Jane Smith took her life on September 1st" should be coded as both male and female.
Item_Location_Front_Page	If the article appears on the front page of the paper or the front page of the website (i.e. does not require searching through multiple links)	0 = No, 1 = Yes
The_Word_Suicide_in_the_Headline	The word 'suicide' must appear in the headline of the publication. No other words/terms acceptable (like "killed self"), just 'suicide'	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. "Robin Williams, depression and the complex causes of suicide" or "Castro death was suicide"
Photo_Picture_of_the_Deceased	A photo of the deceased accompanies the article/publication. Only use for deceased – do not code if a picture	0 = No, 1 = Yes

	of someone who has thought of or attempted suicide.	
Photo_Picture_of_Someone_Looking_Sad	A photo of a person or people looking sad accompanies the article/publication	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Mention_of_Suicide_Method_in_Headline	The article's headline specifically identifies the method of suicide. It does not necessarily need to have the word 'suicide'	0 = No, 1 = Yes  i.e. "Despite attempted intervention by police, man found hanging..."
Mention_of_Suicide_Method_in_Text	Any method mentioned in the text of the article.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Hanging	Hanging method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_SelfPoisoning_Overdose	Self-poisoning method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Jumping_Building	Jumping from a building method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Jumping_Bridge	Jumping from a bridge method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Jumping_Subway	Jumping in front of a subway method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Car_Exhaust	Asphyxia by car exhaust method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Other_Asphyxia	Any other asphyxia method excluding hanging and car exhaust mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Firearm_Shooting	Firearm method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Cutting_Stabbing	Cutting/stabbing method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes

Specific_Method_Described_Drowning	Drowning method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Burning_Electrocution	Burning/electrocution method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_”Suicide_by_cop”	Suicide by being killed by police method mentioned.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Specific_Method_Described_Other	The publication specifically describes that the method used in a/the suicide was with the use of some other method not already covered in previous variables	0 = No, 1 = Yes
If_Method_Described_Described_In_Name	The publication specifically identifies that the method used in a/the suicide was a hanging, jumping, etc.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. "person X shot himself"
If_Method_Described_Described_In_Detail	A description beyond simply naming the method (i.e. "person X researched ways to die, went to a store, bought a gun and shot himself")	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Value Judgment_of_the_Deceased_Unfavourable_Characteristic	A negative statement about the deceased such as: “He was a terrible man...” “He was evil...”, “He never did anything right”	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Value Judgment_of_the_Deceased_Favourable_Characteristic	A positive statement about the deceased such as: “He was a wonderful person...” or “She was gentle...”	0 = No, 1 = Yes
A_Statement_that_Suicide_is_Inevitable	A statement that suicide was inevitable such as: “...there was no way to stop it...” or “it was going to happen no matter what anyone did...”	0 = No, 1 = Yes

Exciting_Reporting	Written in a tabloid manner to excite the reader.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e.
Glorified_Romanticized_reasons_for_the_Suicide	The death is portrayed as noble and the person as seen as a hero.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. "she did it to be with her children" "he was a hero to those who watched him on the internet"
Monocausal explanation for suicide	A single step cause and effect or the suicide is portrayed as 'merely a social phenomenon' as opposed to being 'related to a mental disorder'. Please note that if the article is written to dispel this idea (e.g. Margaret Wentz Oct 29, 2013) then this should not be coded	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. a single step cause and effect - e.g. "he committed suicide because he was angry at his mother" or "she jump because she had lost her job"
A_Statement_of_Approval_of_the_Suicide	Either the author of the article or someone described within the piece agreed with or encouraged the person's suicide.	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. "...many encouraged him and suggested alternative ways to take his life"
Item_notes_the_deceased_was_a_Celebrity	This would apply to anyone who was famous prior to their suicide death but not because of it (i.e. would include Robin Williams, Ariel Castro but not Amanda Todd)	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_includes_interview_with_the_Bereaved		0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_includes_alternatives_to_suicide_such_as_Seeking_Treatment	This should be explicit. It is not enough to say that "we interviewed Dr. X from hospital Y which treats depression". It should be a statement like "getting help for	0 = No, 1 = Yes

	depression may decrease suicidal thoughts”	
Item_includes_community_resource_information_for_those_with_suicidal_ideation	Article specifically tells reader where they can go or who they can call in order to get help	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_includes_examples_of_a_positive_outcome_of_suicidal_crisis	An example of suicidal ideation leading to a positive behavior such as someone calling a suicide hotline/getting help	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_includes_warning_signs_of_suicidal_behaviour	Item includes text specifically indicating some warning signs of suicide	0 = No, 1 = Yes i.e. “Warning signs of suicide include...” or “Get help if your teen experiences...”
Item_includes_how_to_approach_a_suicidal_person	Information included about how to approach someone who is contemplating suicide.	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Item_includes_a_message_of_hope_that_suicidal_ideation_and/or_behaviour_is_treatable	Item includes a clear statement of hope that suicidal thoughts/behaviour can get better or be overcome.	0 = No, 1 = Yes

#### D. Coding Procedures

Preliminary searches for suicide related terms were performed and then articles were manually reviewed to confirm relevance. Given that circulation values of all publications constantly change but were of similar magnitude across the publications included, no specific weighting was given to any article. Articles that were published twice, once in print and once in the online version of a newspaper, were considered as two separate articles to account for circulation with the rationale that an article appearing in two places with similar circulation

would reach approximately double the audience. For similar reasons, the design allowed for inclusion of multiple articles with the same variable coded on the same day.

Articles using suicide-related search terms outside of the context of people ending their lives (e.g. “The Toronto Blue Jays tried to score a run using a suicide squeeze”) were excluded.

Articles were placed into one of two classifications – “major focus”, in which suicide was a major focus of the article, or “minor focus” in which suicide content was restricted to only 1-2 sentences or a brief paragraph within an article on a different topic. The publication date of each article was abstracted. All articles were further classified as to whether they included the word “suicide” in the headline and, for print articles, whether they appeared on the front page of the newspaper or magazine. Print and online versions of The Globe and Mail, National Post and Toronto Star were coded separately. In some cases, online and print articles were either identical or similar with differences in title or text. The study design did not distinguish between these variations and treated each article as an independent exposure.

## **E. Suicide Deaths**

Only people whose cause of death was ruled as suicide by the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario according to the standard of a balance of probabilities were included. This conservative definition, that does not include reevaluation of deaths ruled as undetermined, accidental or by natural causes, was chosen as the focus of this study is the impact of media reporting on confirmed suicide deaths. The Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario provided the primary investigator with a spreadsheet containing the complete list of suicide deaths in Toronto (2011-

2014) including age, sex and method of death. Charts were then manually reviewed by the investigators to confirm these details.

## **F. Odds Ratios**

The odds ratios presented in the main text and appendices reflect the probability that there will be an increase (for the harmful effects model) or a decrease (in the protective effects model) in suicide deaths following any article with a specific characteristic. For example, if the odds ratio for a “statement that suicide is inevitable” is 1.97 in the harmful effects model, then that indicates that the odds of an increase in suicide after an article with such a statement are roughly double the odds of there being no change or a decrease.