

P03-310

IMITATION SUICIDE: THE WERTHER EFFECT

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Suicide is the primary emergency for the mental health professional and it is also a major public health problem. Although it is impossible to predict, there are numerous clues that can help to reduce the risk of suicide. Goethe's novel *Die Lieder des Jungen Werther*, first published in 1774, in which the protagonist of the story decides to commit suicide by shooting himself, was followed by a wave of imitation suicides across Europe. Later, in 1974, Phillips coined the term "Werther Effect" to describe a situation where the observer copies the suicidal behaviour he has seen modelled in the media. However this was not the first demonstration of the contagious effect of suicide. There are descriptions of several similar suicides among young men in ancient Greece, and it is said that Shakespeare's novel, *Romeo and Juliet*, inspired a countless number of young couples to commit suicide. It is known that reading about, seeing or hearing about suicidal behaviours seems to induce imitative behaviour, and this is more notorious among adolescents. There are several reports of increased suicidal behaviour after exposure to suicide-related material on the media. The individual characteristics of adolescents who are susceptible to imitation are currently unknown, but it is accepted that the amount and duration of exposure to the information are important factors in the imitative learning. The authors intend to do a psychopathological and sociological approach to the theme.