



Global Health  
Equity Foundation

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# Community-Based Media Project for Suicide Prevention

*Promising Strategies in Risk Communication*

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# **Presenter Disclosures**

**Tayeb Al-Hafez, MD**

**(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:**

**No relationships to disclose**

# Suicide in Montana

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- During 2010, suicide rates among Montana youth were twice the national average
- From 2000 to 2009, suicide was the #2 cause of death among youths in Montana
- The 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 6.5 percent of youths in grades 9-12 had attempted suicide

# GHEF's Approach

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- **Field research**
- **Consensus-building forums**
- **Interdisciplinary approach involving NGOs, public health organizations, schools and academic centers, the media and other assets**

# Building Partnerships

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- **County and State health departments**
- **Montana State University Billings (Professor Sarah Keller)**
- **Non-profit organizations**
- **Middle schools and high schools**
- **Radio stations and local newspapers**

# Challenges to Overcome

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- “Cowboy-Up” mentality/stereotype
- Gaps in well-being awareness
- Gaps in mental health services
- Social and geographical isolation

# The Goals

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- **Get the population at ease with communicating about depression and suicide**
- **Improve awareness of, and access to, Montana's suicide-prevention resources**
- **Increase self-help in accessing school counselors, public health, hotlines and other outlets**



# Let's Talk

Starting the conversation about suicide



# Giving Youth the Power

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- Using multimedia tools and collaborative forums, *Let's Talk* educates and empowers youth in media workshops
- Their art, stories and performances are presented to generate conversations

# A Trans-Media Approach

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- **Community-based theater performances**
- **A youth photography workshop and exhibits**
- **A social media website to promote awareness and use of suicide-prevention resources**
- **Branching out! Other media and recreational activities**



# Let's Talk

Awareness and education in the context of regional culture

***“I feel like we can make an impact. It’s not like we started a fire, but we definitely made a spark in the community!”***

**Sarah Mosdal**

**Teen Participant, Let’s Talk Miles City**

# Preliminary Results

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- **When asked, 66% had heard of a local suicide prevention campaign**
- **35% knew the name of the Let's Talk campaign**

# Preliminary Results

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- **62% said they would go to the Internet for information on suicide and depression**
- **32% knew of specific resources they could go to for suicide and depression**

# After Exposure to Let's Talk

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**Students were more likely to feel comfortable talking to someone else if a friend confided in them about suicidal thoughts or intentions.**

**(pre-test mean = 1.56, SD = 1.39; post-test mean = 1.96, SD = 1.02;  $p \leq .01$ )**

# After Exposure to Let's Talk

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**Students were more likely to trust professional sources for confiding about suicidal thoughts or depression. More of these students considered a teacher, school counselor or social workers to be trustworthy sources to communicate with about a suicidal thought.**

**(pre-test mean = 2.80, SD = 1.43; post-test mean = 3.06, SD = 1.1;  $p \leq .05$ )**



# Ongoing Effectiveness Study

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The National Institutes of Health, Montana IDeA Networks for Biomedical Research Excellence, funded a three-pronged social scientific study to evaluate this approach to increasing awareness and access to suicide prevention resources.

# Applicability and Scalability

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The underlying concepts of this project—creating effective awareness and education in the context of a regional culture—can be applied with success to many health equity challenges in different regions of the United States and throughout the world.

# Needs for Success

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- **Spirited guidance**
- **Community engagement and commissioning**
- **Commitment of resources**

# Needs for Success

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- Miles City: [www.letstalkmilescity.org](http://www.letstalkmilescity.org)
- Billings: [www.letstalkbillings.org](http://www.letstalkbillings.org)
- GHEF USA: [www.ghef.org](http://www.ghef.org)
- GHEF International: [www.ghef.org/ch](http://www.ghef.org/ch)