

classified as nonsuicidal in which there was a documented history of one or more previous suicide attempts.

The aggregate of social, religious, and financial forces operating on medical examiners result in underreporting of suicide. HEW's vital statistics experts generally concede this, and the same point is made in the sociological and psychological literature.

DAWN medical examiner data indicate suicide as the manner of death in 42 percent of propoxyphene cases. For DAWN emergency room mentions, suicide attempts/gestures are recorded as the motive in 56 percent of the citations (DAWN-VI). We isolated the specific DAWN emergency room cases where the outcome was indicated as fatal and looked for the same case subsequently mentioned by a DAWN medical examiner; we found thirty-eight such case sequences. Sixty-one percent were reported to be suicides by the emergency room and 58 percent determined to be suicides by the medical examiner. Although thirty-four out of thirty-eight cases (89 percent) were classified in manner of death as suicide by either the medical examiner or the emergency room, there was agreement between medical examiner and emergency room with respect to suicide in only eleven of the thirty-eight cases (29 percent). Clearly, "manner of death" characterizations in DAWN must be evaluated carefully.