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Background: 'Werther effect' is a term synonymous with suicide clusters, following a trend for suicide instigated by a historic book. Depending on cluster size, they can be named 'point' or 'mass' clusters. These phenomena, typically affecting adolescents, can have substantial emotional consequences for a community. There is a paucity of comprehensive literature in this area, hence our aim was to investigate cluster triggers and demographics.

Method: A comprehensive review using a PubMed search was undertaken. Search terms were 'suicide cluster', 'recent suicide' and 'suicide outbreaks'. As this was a review paper ethical approval was waived.

Results: Saman et al (1992) describe two 'high risk' spatial clusters which translated to a 38% increase in relative suicide risk. They also describe how suicide method is remarkably consistent within a cluster supported by Exeter and Boyle (2006). Qi et al (2006), in comparison to Saman et al, demonstrated how clusters may have variable risk groups, with differing correlations between age of females and suicide rates. All studies highlighted the central part media played in commencement of suicide clusters.

Conclusion: With globally increasing levels of mental health issues, the recession and other demands of 21st century living, rates of suicide could increase and knowledge in this area is therefore vital at the level of government resource allocation and for the health care professionals delivering care on a daily basis. We found a strong correlation with media exposure and subsequent suicide clusters.