



## Struggling in Silence: Physician Depression and Suicide

### FACT SHEET

#### General Statistics:

- Each year in the U.S., roughly 300 to 400 physicians die by suicide.
- Physician deaths from smoking-related illnesses decreased 40 to 60 percent after targeted educational campaigns to reduce smoking among physicians. Suicide rates among physicians are not decreasing, presumably because little attention has been paid to this issue.
- Depression is a major risk factor in physician suicide. Other factors include bipolar disorder and alcohol and substance abuse.
- There is no evidence that work-related stressors are linked to elevated rates of suicide in physicians.
- Medical students have rates of depression 15 to 30 percent higher than the general population.
- Contributing to the higher suicide rate among physicians is their higher completion to attempt ratio, which may result from greater knowledge of lethality of drugs and easy access to means.

#### Statistics by Gender:

- In the U.S., suicide deaths are 250 to 400 percent higher among female physicians when compared to females in other professions.
- Among male physicians, death by suicide is 70 percent higher when compared to males in other professions.
- In the general population, males complete suicide four times more often than females. However, female physicians have a rate equal to male physicians.
- Women physicians have a higher rate of major depression than age-matched women with doctorate degrees.

#### About the Project:

- *Struggling in Silence* is part of AFSP's continuing commitment to reducing physician depression and suicide.
- In addition to the documentary, AFSP developed two educational videos for use in medical schools and hospitals; both include resource materials and discussion guides.
- AFSP's Physician Depression and Suicide Prevention Project was launched in 2002, with a conference in San Diego. A consensus statement was later drafted and published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 2003.
- Additional meetings and research led to the development of these films.
- For more information visit [www.doctorswithdepression.org](http://www.doctorswithdepression.org)