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**Research: Suicides May Be Higher Than Thought**

Today marks World Suicide Prevention Day, but new research in the respected international journal 'Public Health' suggests suicides may be higher than Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data show.

Dr Samara McPhedran, co-author of the peer-reviewed study, said "During ABS annual data collection, open coroner's cases are classed as accidental deaths, but not re-classified if the final determination is suicide, for example."

Open cases have increased in recent years, leading to 'over-counting' of unintentional deaths and 'under-counting' of suicides, a misclassification with serious implications for research based on ABS numbers.

"Using the wrong figures to investigate the impacts of suicide prevention efforts is like trying to navigate around Sydney using a Melbourne street directory. When we are talking about lives, we do not want to get lost," Dr McPhedran said.

Misclassification of deaths as 'accidental' could also explain the apparent rise in unintentional firearm-related deaths after the 1996 gun laws.

However, 'under-counting' suicides may mean firearm suicides, the only type of death the legislation appeared to affect, are in fact higher than thought.

The authors recommend crosschecking ABS data against coronial records, and revision where necessary.

**Contact:**

**Dr Samara McPhedran –**  
**0415 963 189/+61 415 963 189**  
Chair, International Coalition for Women in  
Shooting and Hunting (WiSH)

**Dr Jeanine Baker –**  
**0427 186 184/+61 427 186 184**

**Executive summary available from:**

[http://www.ic-wish.org/unintentional\\_firearm\\_deaths.htm](http://www.ic-wish.org/unintentional_firearm_deaths.htm)

**References**

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