 **NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of ‘The truth about suicide, the impact on staff and what helps’ conference film clip recording**

**Speaker**: Dr Rachel Gibbons, Chair Working Group on the Effect of Suicide and Homicide on Clinicians, Vice-Chair of the Psychotherapy Faculty, Royal College of Psychiatrists, Consultant Psychiatrist and Consultant Medical Psychotherapist

I'm Dr Rachel Gibbons. I'm a consultant psychiatrist, a psychoanalyst and group analyst. And my session is the truth about suicide, the impact that suicide has on those bereaved and what helps. And what I'm aiming to do in this session is to talk a little bit about my own experience about why I find myself and have found myself working on suicide nearly half of every week since about 2008. The sort of learning that I've done, because I've been impacted seriously by patient deaths by suicide. But the learning that I've done through this, through these sort of 15, 16 years of working on suicide, about the nature of the beast, if you like. Because I think it's something we talk about a lot, but actually have very little time to think in more depth about, you know, that suicide strikes at the heart of what it means to be human and have a bit of time in thinking about it in the way that I have. And I've heard probably 1500 or so, cases, sort of stories of those bereaved by suicide, but also more than that, the stories of people who've died by suicide.

Been looking at data, looking at coroner’s records, doing research, writing, reading, rather obsessively engaging with suicide. And I'll start off by talking about the sort of top truths because I think what we can be told about suicide is not in any way the reality of it. And when you start studying it and working on it, you start to, to find that some of the things you're hearing don't match up at all with the common accepted understanding. So, I'll, I'll share some of the, the top truths, and I call them 'my truths' about suicide and what I've found out about it and see very much whether it resonates with your experience.

And I think there's also something about thinking about suicide and engaging with it at a deeper philosophical level that helps us think a bit about human nature, and maybe the destructive aspects of human nature. But also, something about death, sort of life and death. You know, what, the sort of struggle to live, knowing that you're also going to die.

So, talking a bit about that, and then I'll move on to thinking about what makes suicide, and I think it's not just suicide, but sudden losses. I think it can be sort of widened to think about sudden losses. What can make them so difficult to, to grieve and the struggles that those bereaved are left with. And patterns I've noticed, and we've noticed in, in what happens in the mind of the bereaved that make it particularly difficult to move on, but also make it very difficult within our systems to process these very profound traumatic losses. We've done a lot of work on this, since 2008 when this, I had these experiences, there was no support or, nobody really talked about this at all, or the impact that these losses have on clinicians, and thank heavens were a lot further along now. And we've done a lot of work in the Royal College in writing guidelines, doing research and writing guidelines about what helps and support booklets.

So, what I'll also do towards the end of the session is to share some of this work with you, giving you references, and you know, allow you to sort of see maybe the headlines again of what we think helps and, and how organisations should move forward thinking about the pastoral care of their staff. Because if it's right that quite a lot of us have suffered quite significant traumas in, in the workplace as a nature of the work we do, that really needs to be thought about by, by the organisations.

So, the advice we're giving to organisations is to help, with the pastoral care of their staff, you know a after these, after these very tragic events.

The film was produced in October 2024 and can be found at <https://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk/conference/> or <https://vimeo.com/1019754051>

For more information visit [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or contact supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk

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