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Mr Ian Beales  
Secretary  
Editors' Code of Practice Committee  
PO Box 235  
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September 12 2008

Dear Ian

Thank you for meeting us recently and for the copy of The Editors' Codebook. We both felt that it was a useful discussion and provided additional insight into the remit and functioning of the Code of Practice Committee.

It was most encouraging to hear that you too are concerned about copycat suicides and that this was the main reason for an amendment of clause 5 which refers to excessive reporting of suicide method. We quote from The Editors' Codebook:

**Copycat Suicide:** In 2006, after considering international evidence highlighting the dangers of imitative deaths following reports of suicide, the Code committee introduced a new sub-clause requiring that care be taken, when reporting suicide, "*to avoid excessive detail about the method used.*"

Whilst acknowledging that this was an important move in the right direction we do not believe that it is sufficient. Copycat suicide does not happen solely as a result of publicising detail of method.

We therefore propose four suggestions that we respectfully ask both you and the Code Committee to consider.

1. That '*reporting suicide*' should be a separate clause as distinct from *Intrusion into grief and shock*.
2. The current wording to be replaced by: *When reporting suicide care should be taken to avoid any detail that may contribute to copycat suicide, such as detail of method or location.*
3. This statement to be supported by detailed Guidance Notes on the reporting of suicide.

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4. That you consider removing the word 'excessive' from the current and any future clause for the reasons we discussed with you (see our discussion document 11<sup>th</sup> August 2008)

We believe that a general statement - item 2 above - encompasses all scenarios that may contribute to copycat suicide. The reference to 'detail' in the statement could be defined / clarified in the Guidance Notes.

In conclusion, we hope that we were able to convincingly demonstrate to you that PAPYUS has a valuable insight into the subject of suicide and we wish to support the media industry in whatever way we can to play its part in prevention.

We hope that our suggestions are realistic in terms of their being easily adopted and we look forward to your response once you have had the opportunity to discuss them with your colleagues on the Code Committee.

Kind Regards

Anne

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Chair / PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide

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