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Fatalities in road traffic, a result of accidents or suicides

Introduction/Problem statement
Since 2010 Sweden presents suicides in road traffic separately from fatalities caused by accidents. The aim with this study was to assess the number of road traffic suicides by studying the fatality from three angles; the vehicle, the road and the road user. The main focus was to work out and perform a psychosocial examination of the road user.

Methods
The examination of the road user was performed in cooperating with accident investigators at the Swedish Transport Administration, the police, relatives, witnesses of accidents as well as with information from autopsy reports, and case records from earlier medical service. During 2012 a special investigator in behavioural science and with experience from counselling at hospitals conducted the examinations. The suspected suicides were classified by an expert group of five experienced persons with knowledge in Forensic Medicine, psychology and traffic safety using a classification system developed by the group. First the classification was made without information from the psychosocial examination. A second classification was performed with the additional psychosocial information. Forty-nine cases were studied.

Results
In 2012, twenty-two (7%) cases were classified as suicides without the psychosocial information and thirty-six (11%) with all information included. The unclear cases were reduced from 20 to 8. From 2013 and forward the classifications were made only once with all available information. In 2012-2014, 89 fatalities were classified as suicides i.e. 10% of all road traffic fatalities. Year 2010-2011, when the classifications were made without the additional psychosocial information, 6% of the road fatalities were classified as suicides.

Conclusions
By including psychosocial factors in the classification of suspected suicides the number of unclear cases were reduced. In order to work with suicide prevention the size and the pattern of the problem must be known.