

Headline	Finding a way out for would be victims		
MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	03 Jan 2012	Color	Full Color
Section	Local News	Circulation	136,530
Page No	12,13	Readership	330,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	688 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 20,351
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 61,054



# Finding a way out for would-be victims

**TAKING IT SERIOUSLY:** Suicide cases in the country are increasing at an alarming rate, prompting an association to come up with a suicide prevention action plan, writes *Elizabeth Zachariah*

**S**TATISTICS show that last year, two Malaysians committed suicide every day, although the actual numbers are believed to be three to four times higher.

This is the finding of experts, who have expressed concern that cases of suicide are increasing at an alarming rate.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Medical Centre Professor of Psychiatry, Dr T. Maniam, said the latest report by the National Suicide Registry Malaysia showed that between January and August last year, there were 425 suicide cases.

Dr Maniam, however, believed that the number could be at least three to four times higher since there were no proper records of suicides.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), meanwhile, estimated that approximately one million people commit suicide each year, which represents a global mortality rate of 16 people per 100,000 or one death every 40 seconds.

WHO also predicted that by 2020, the suicide rate would increase to one every 20 seconds.

In the high-risk group are those between the ages of 16 and 25.

“And the numbers are rising rapidly and alarmingly.”

Dr Maniam, who is also the Malaysian national representative in the Council of National Representatives of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, said it was important that the public be made aware that the next victim could be within their circle.

“It has been quite hard to get the public to be interested in something like this,” he said, adding that it was a serious problem that was “largely preventable”.

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Dr Maniam said the association had come up with a suicide prevention action plan, which was being reviewed by the Health Ministry.

“It is a comprehensive plan that discusses ways to reduce suicide rates in the country. We hope that the public can learn how to recognise people with suicide tendencies and take it seriously.”

Interestingly, he said some studies have shown that 70 per cent of suicide victims had given some indication, directly or indirectly, of their intentions.

“Many of them do tell their close friends or teachers that they want to kill themselves. But most of the

time, no one takes them seriously,” he said, adding that studies have shown that older people were less likely to show any indications compared with young people.

Research shows that the biggest factor contributing to suicide is clinical depression.

Dr Maniam said while depression was a common human experience, clinical depression went beyond that.

“Depression can lead to clinical depression if the patients don’t get the proper help and support needed. It constitutes an illness and those around them should view it quite seriously.”

He said many were not aware that

clinical depression could cause heart problems, diabetes and brain damage if not dealt with.

There were also those who did not have any psychiatric problems but felt burdened by life’s problems which, Dr Maniam said, was not an uncommon reason for suicides.

“At that moment when they feel that life has failed them, there’s a sense of hopelessness. They become impulsive and end their lives as an escape.”

Other factors behind depression include mental illness, and alcohol-and drug-related problems.

However, there are some who do not intend to die but use the suicide threat as a means to seek help.

“So, after a few tries, people might not take them seriously, but that should not be the case.

“If they keep doing it, they are bound to lose their lives one day.”

“Many of them do tell their close friends or teachers that they want to kill themselves. But, most of the time, no one takes them seriously.”

**Dr T. Maniam**  
UKM Medical Centre  
Professor  
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