



## **Shocking Statistic: Physician Suicide Affects 1 Million People Each Year**

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Pamela Wible, M.D., is bringing the nation's attention to a truly shocking statistic. As revealed in a recent article on [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/when-doctors-commit-suicide-its-often-hushed-up/2014/07/14/d8f6eda8-e0fb-11e3-9743-bb9b59cde7b9\\_story.html?tid=pm\\_national\\_pop](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/when-doctors-commit-suicide-its-often-hushed-up/2014/07/14/d8f6eda8-e0fb-11e3-9743-bb9b59cde7b9_story.html?tid=pm_national_pop), as many as 1 million Americans lose their physicians to suicide each year, often without even being aware of this. Physician suicide is rarely mentioned or properly dealt with. Dr. Wible is helping address this issue by breaking through the taboo. She hopes that this will help improve the quality of healthcare overall.

"I've been a doctor for 20 years", says Pamela Wible. "I've never lost a patient to suicide. But I've lost friends, colleagues, lovers ? all male physicians." Four hundred physicians per year are lost to suicide, according to a Medscape report, which pointed out that "perhaps in part because of their greater knowledge of and better access to lethal means, physicians have a far higher suicide completion rate than the general public."

Dr. Wible believes that physician suicide won't be solved as long as it is a taboo subject. Death and suicide are feared in this country, and physicians are almost expected to be above that. This is perhaps also why

there is scant data and a lack of significant research on the reasons physicians die by suicide.

Dr. Wible suggests that one reason why there are so many suicides is loss of job satisfaction due to high-volume, high-overhead clinics, which she describes as "assembly-line medicine." In her career, she has lost many physicians to suicide. Most remain hidden from public view.

"In a TEDx talk I gave to help break the silence on physician suicide, I pointed out why so many doctors and medical students are burning out," adds Dr. Wible. "We see far too much pain; to ask for help is considered a weakness; to visit a psychiatrist can be professional suicide, meaning that we risk loss of license and hospital privileges, not to mention wariness from patients if our emotional distress becomes known."

Dr. Wible is not alone. Other articles have been written by physicians, such as internist Daniele Drake, who feels that being a doctor is now the most miserable profession. Shortly thereafter, however, her article was rebutted by pediatrician Aaron Carroll, who believed there is nothing wrong. Both articles can be found on <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/834434>

Dr. Wible believes that the issue can, and should, be resolved. She advises that a doctor's cries for help should never be ignored, Blaming and shaming physicians in pain should be avoided at all costs, and ultimately we need more support and compassion for our doctors. To learn more about how to stop physician suicide and how to create a more ideal clinic, physicians are encouraged to attend Dr. Wible's next retreat at <http://www.idealmedicalcare.org/teleclass.php/>

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### **Pamela Wible, M.D.**

*Dr. Wible leads the ideal medical care movement and is an expert in medical student and physician suicide prevention. She has been named 2015 Women Leader in Medicine.*

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