

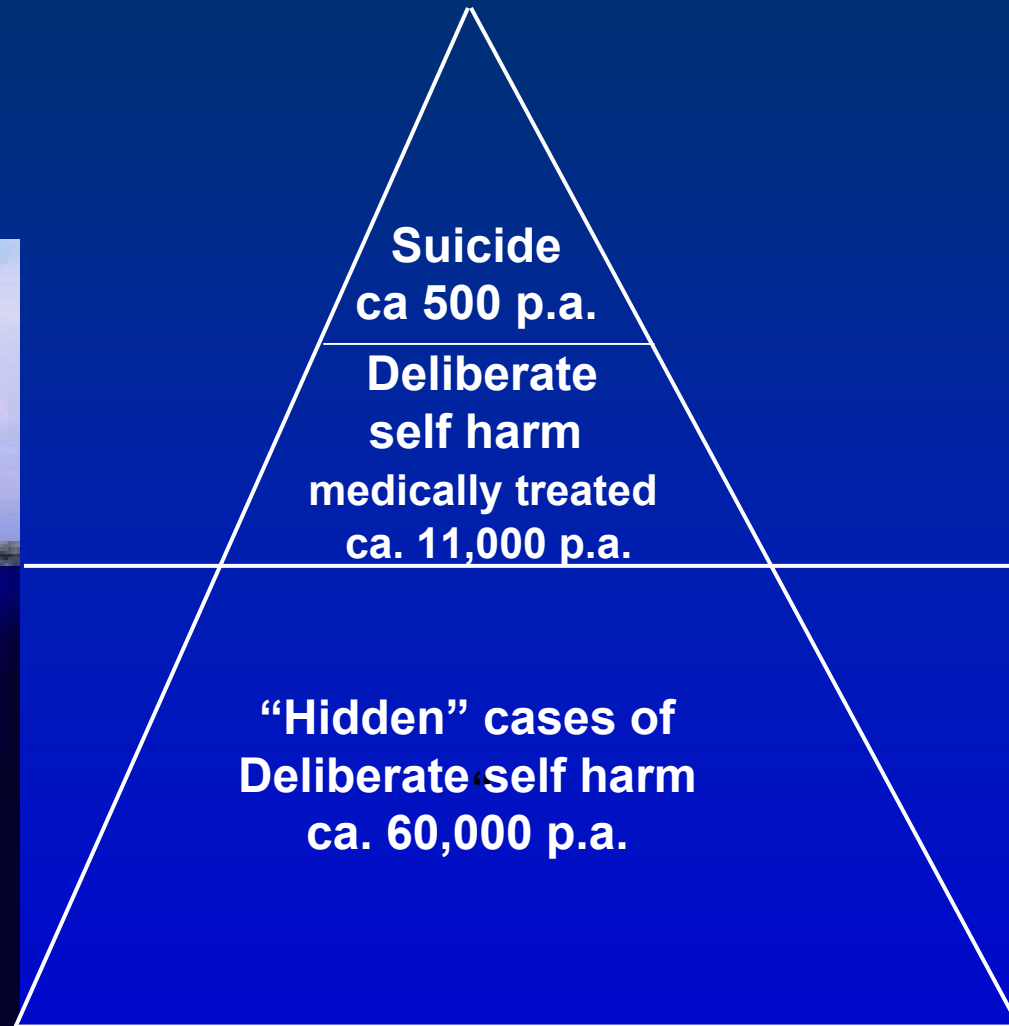
Approaches to Suicide Prevention in Europe

Dr Ella Arensman
National Suicide Research Foundation
Ireland

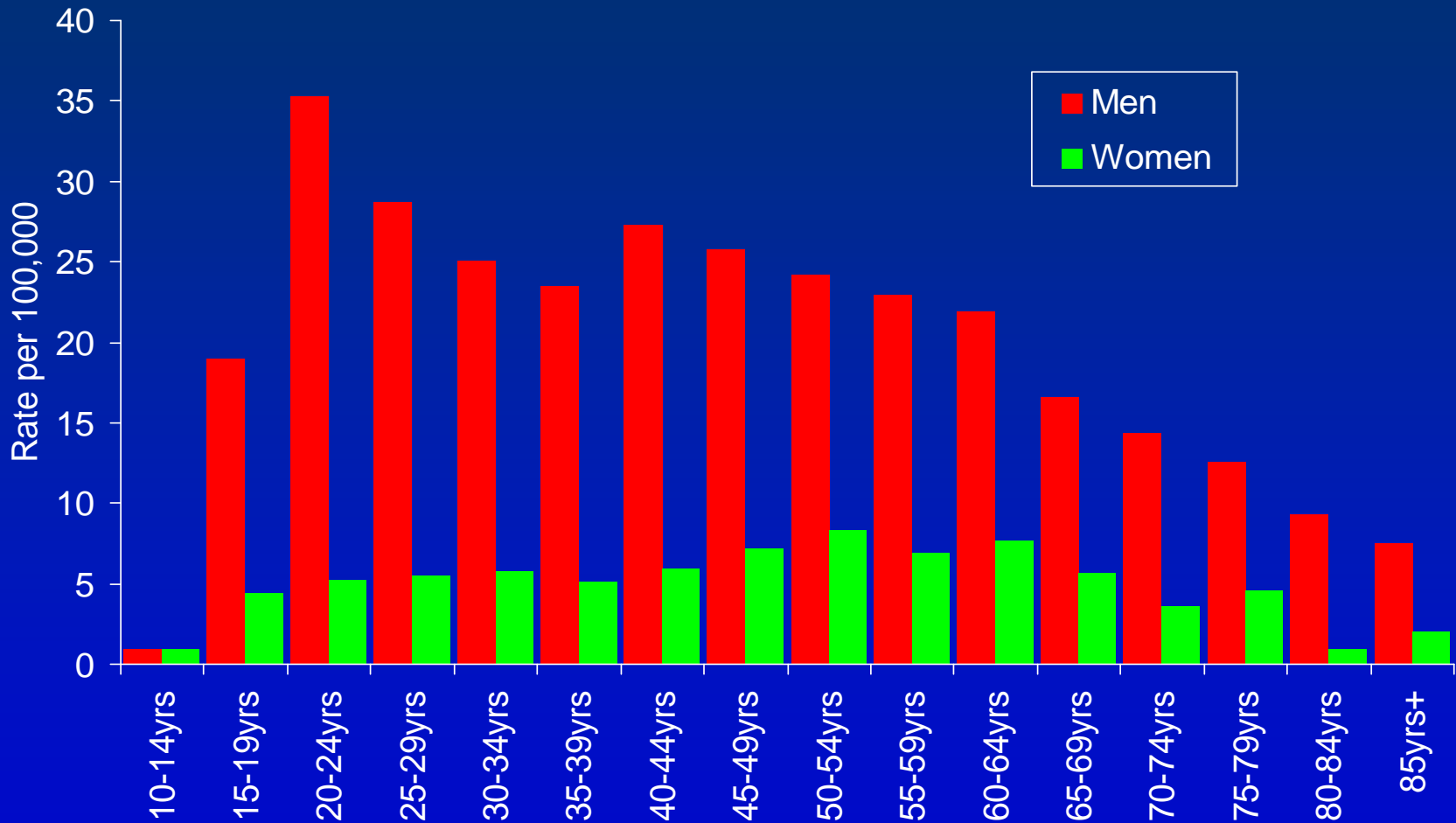
2nd Injury Prevention Conference for the UK and Ireland
Cardiff, 24th – 25th September 2009



Suicide and medically treated deliberate self harm in Ireland: The tip of the iceberg

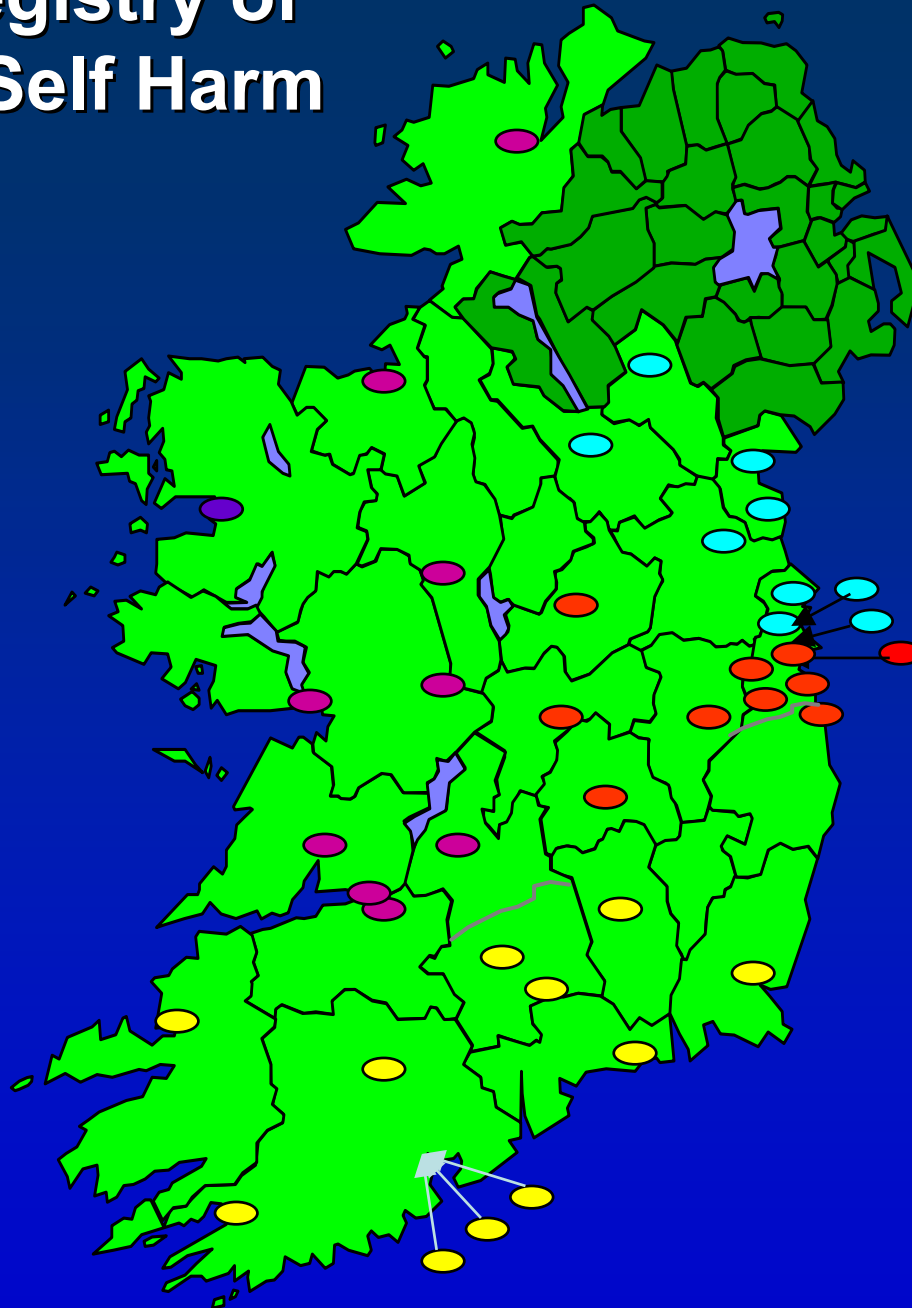


Average suicide rates by age and gender in Ireland, 2002-2006



National Registry of Deliberate Self Harm (NRDSH)

Coverage:
All 40 Hospital
Emergency
departments in
Ireland



HSE Dublin/
Mid-Leinster

HSE Dublin/
North East

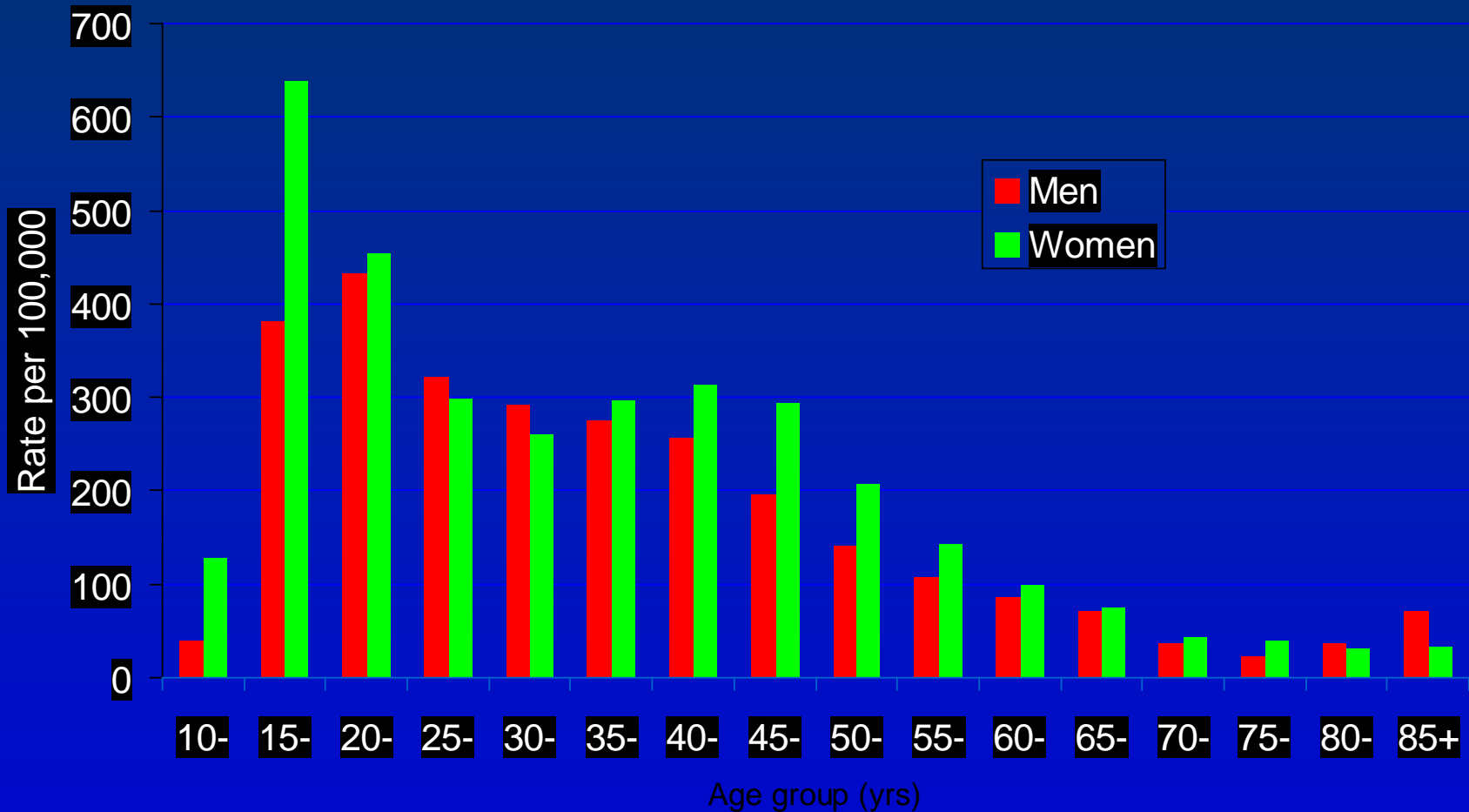
HSE South

HSE West

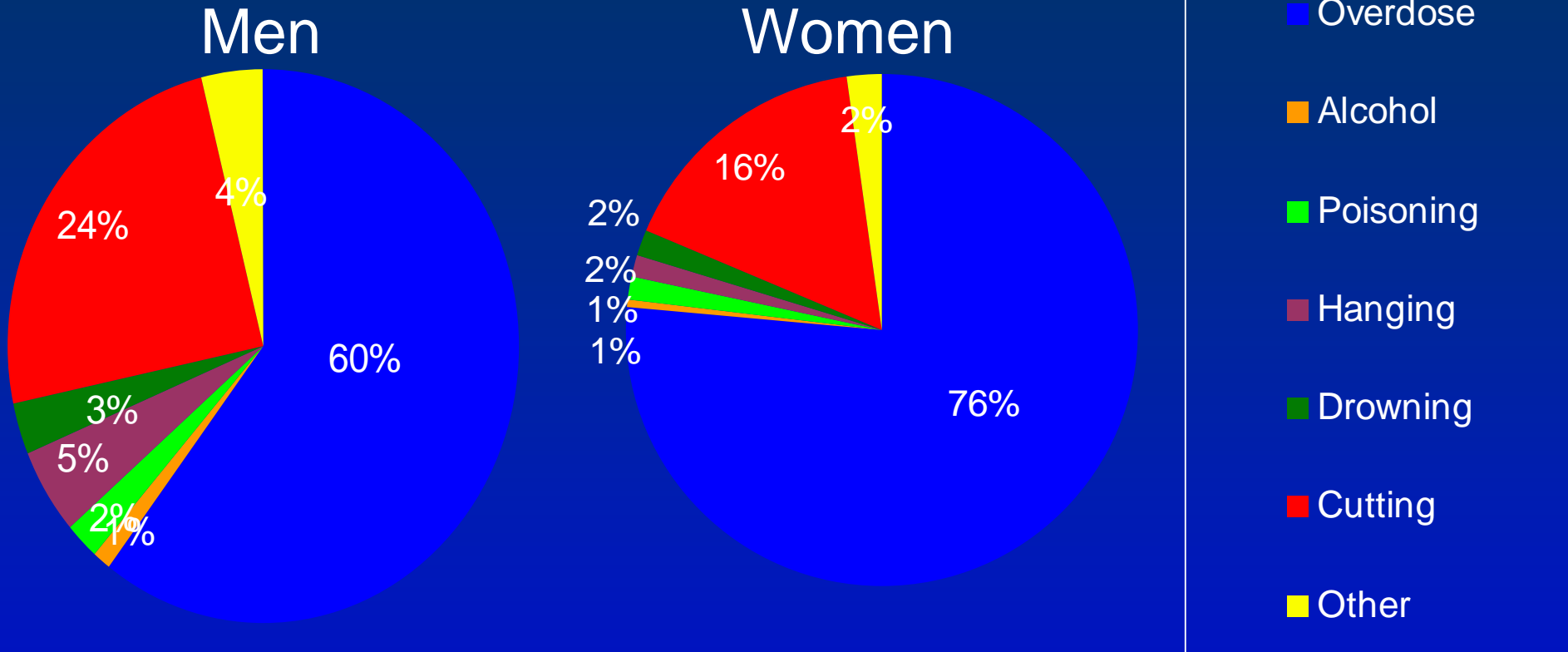


Incidence of DSH in Ireland by age and gender, 2008

Person-based rates per 100,000



Main method of deliberate self harm, 2008

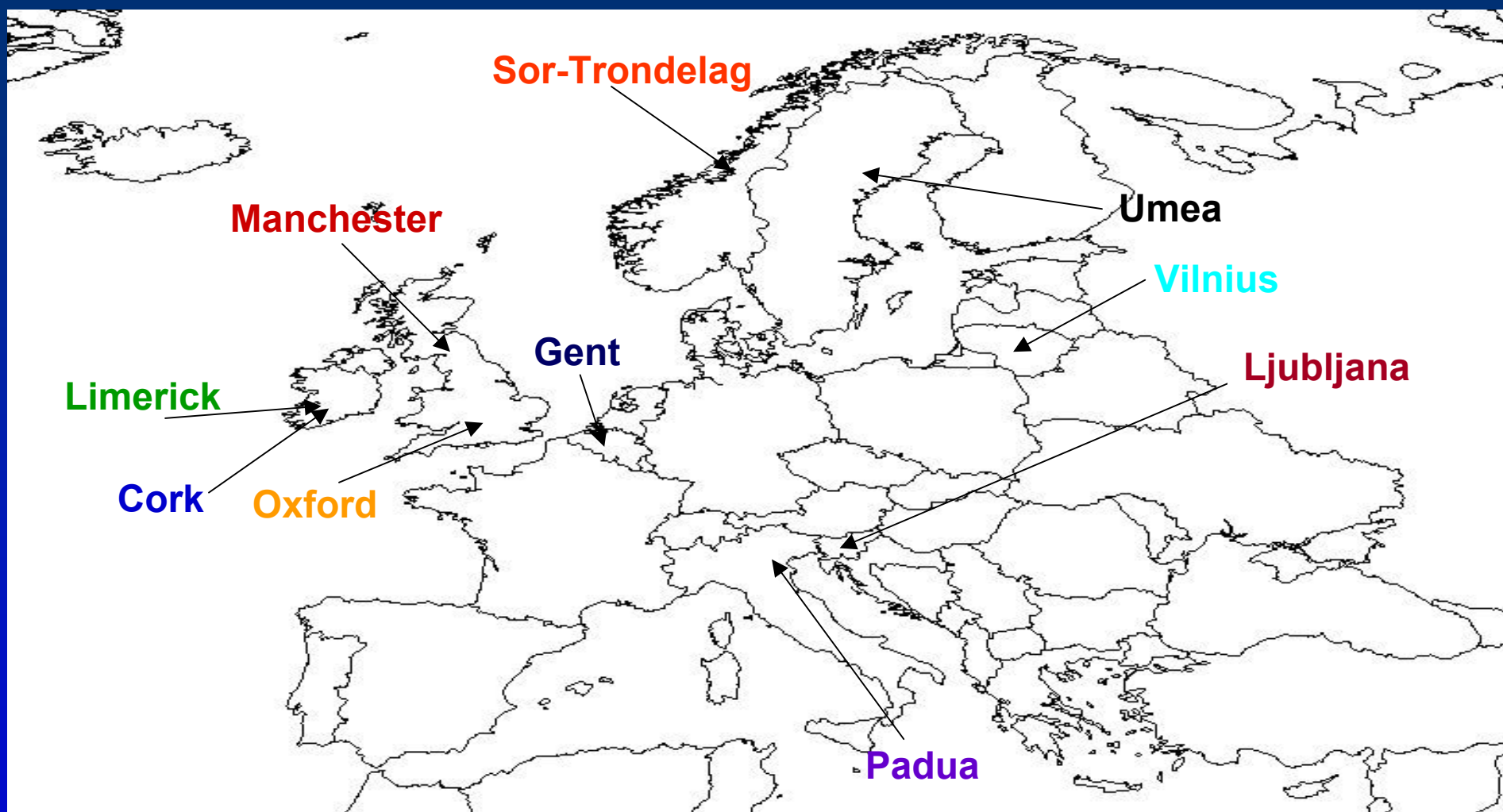


p<.01

Alcohol was involved in 46% and 38% of male and female DSH acts, respectively



Participating regions in the Network on International Collaboration on Evidence in Suicide Prevention (NICE-SP)



Methodology

- Data collection in 8 regions in 6 European countries
- Patients, aged ≥ 15 years presenting to hospital following DSH from hospital catchment area
- Standardised method of data collection, developed as a standard for European regions collaborating in the WHO Multicentre Study on Suicidal behaviour (*Platt et al, 1992*)
- Demographic variables and characteristics of the DSH episode.
- All regions except Manchester participated in the WHO Multicentre study between 1989 and 2000.

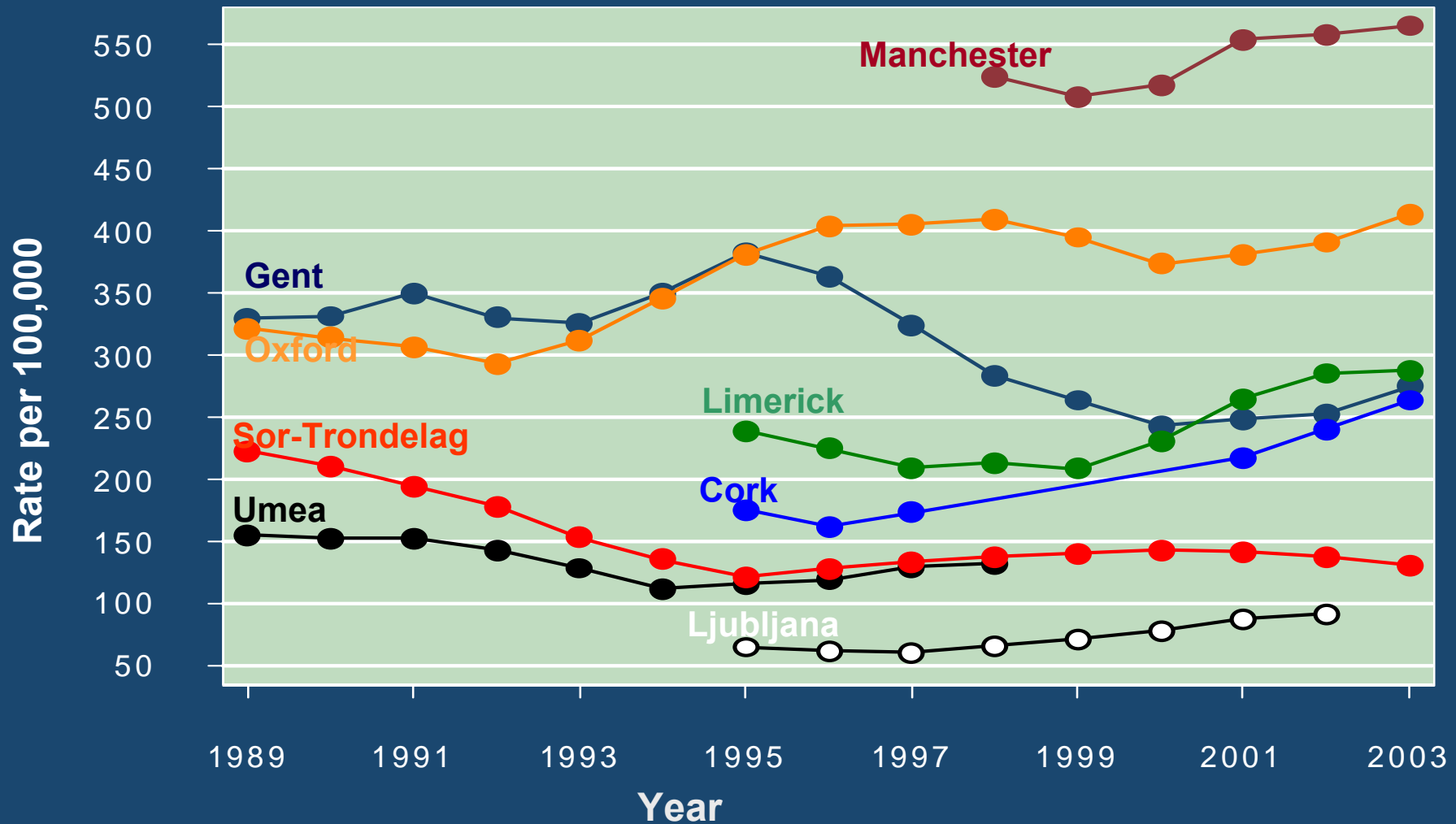
Methodology ctd.

- Start monitoring of DSH:
Oxford, Gent, Sor-Trondelag, Umea, Padua: 1989
Cork, Limerick, Ljubljana: 1995
Manchester: 1998

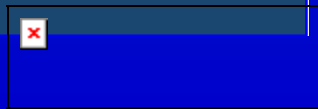
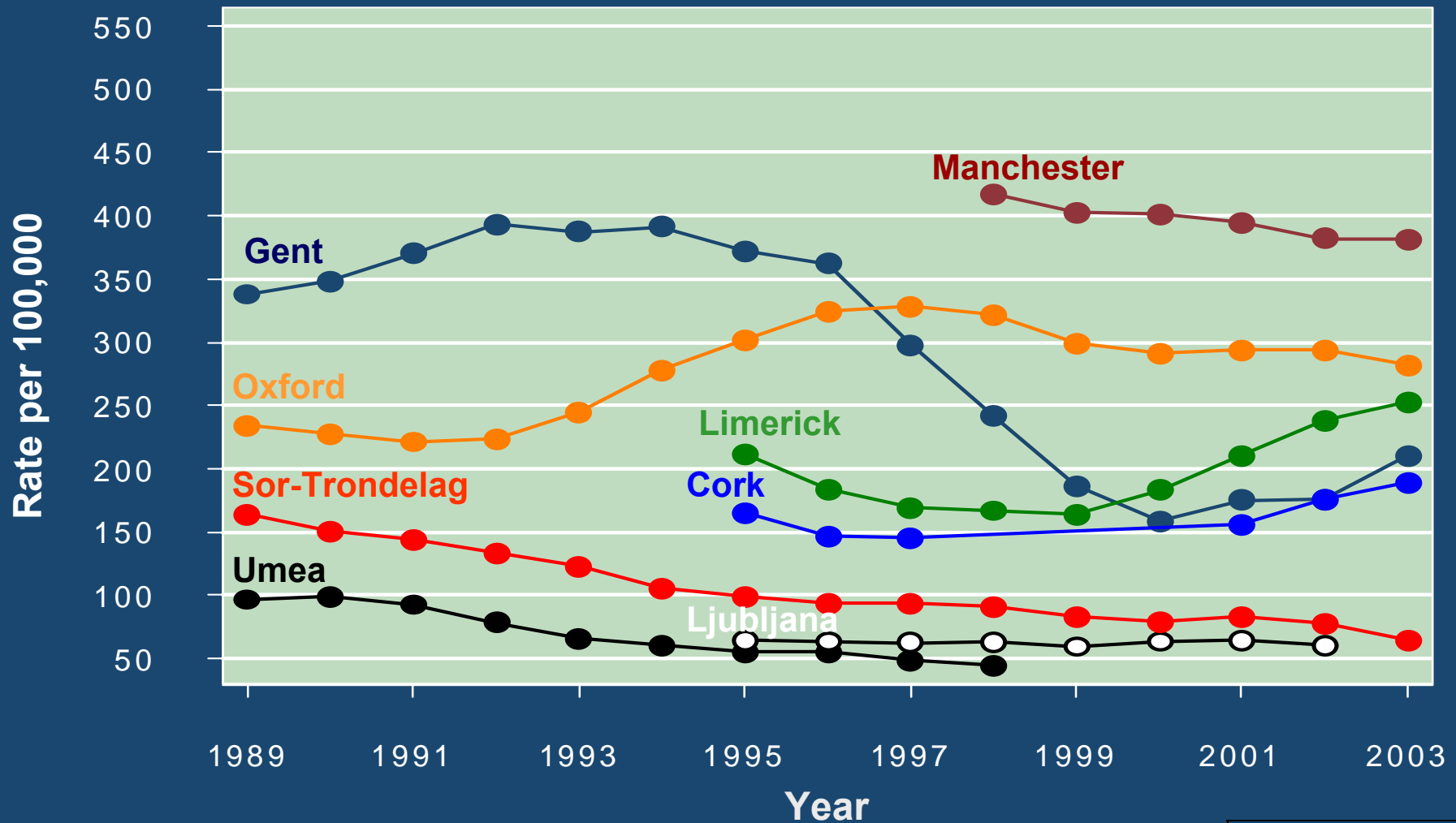
Total number of DSH episodes 1989-2003: N=44,495

- Data analysis:
 - Annual person-based rates of DSH age-standardised
 - Three-year rolling averages

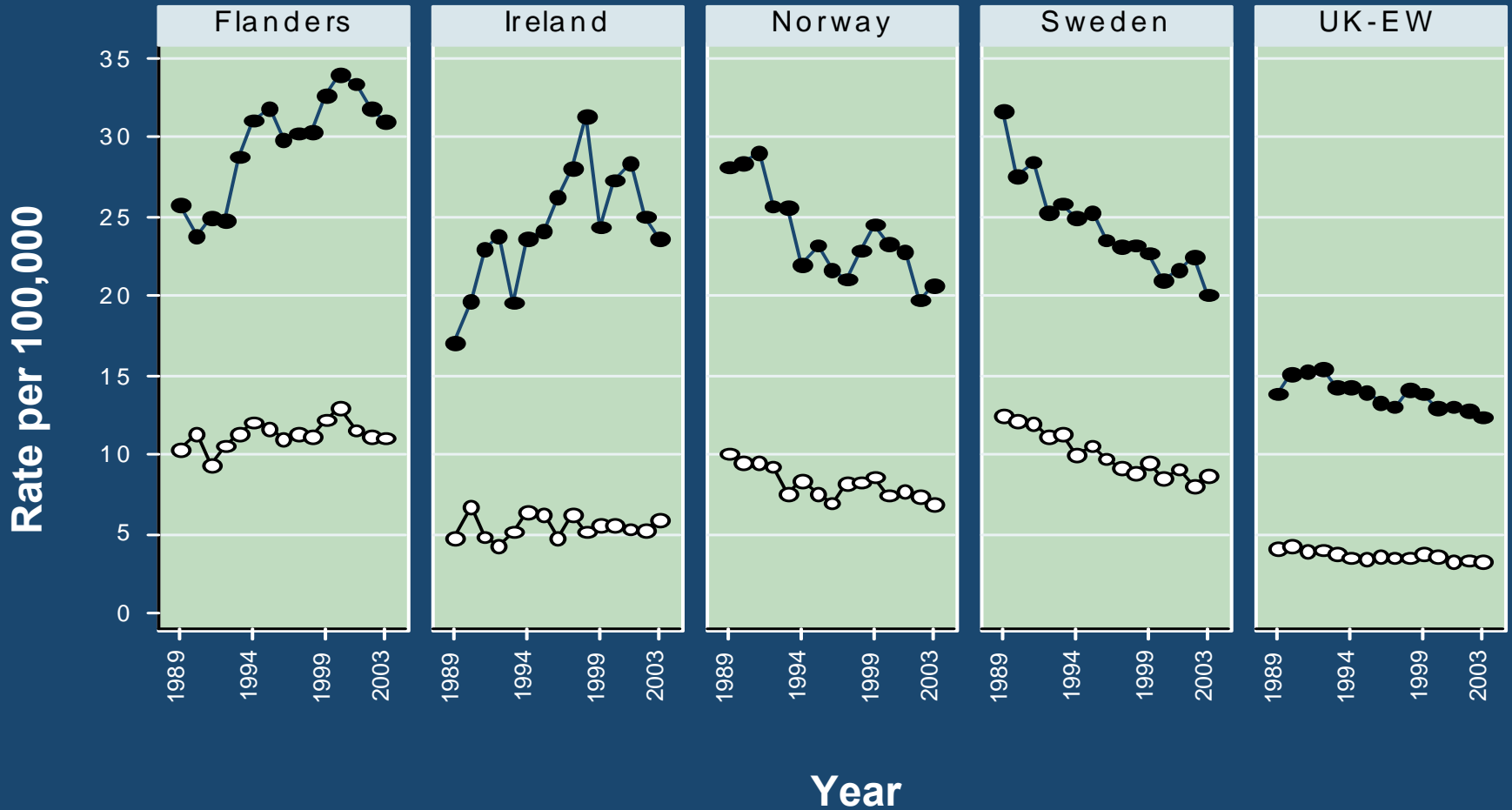
Deliberate Self Harm: person-based three-year rolling average rates per 100,000 for women in 8 European regions



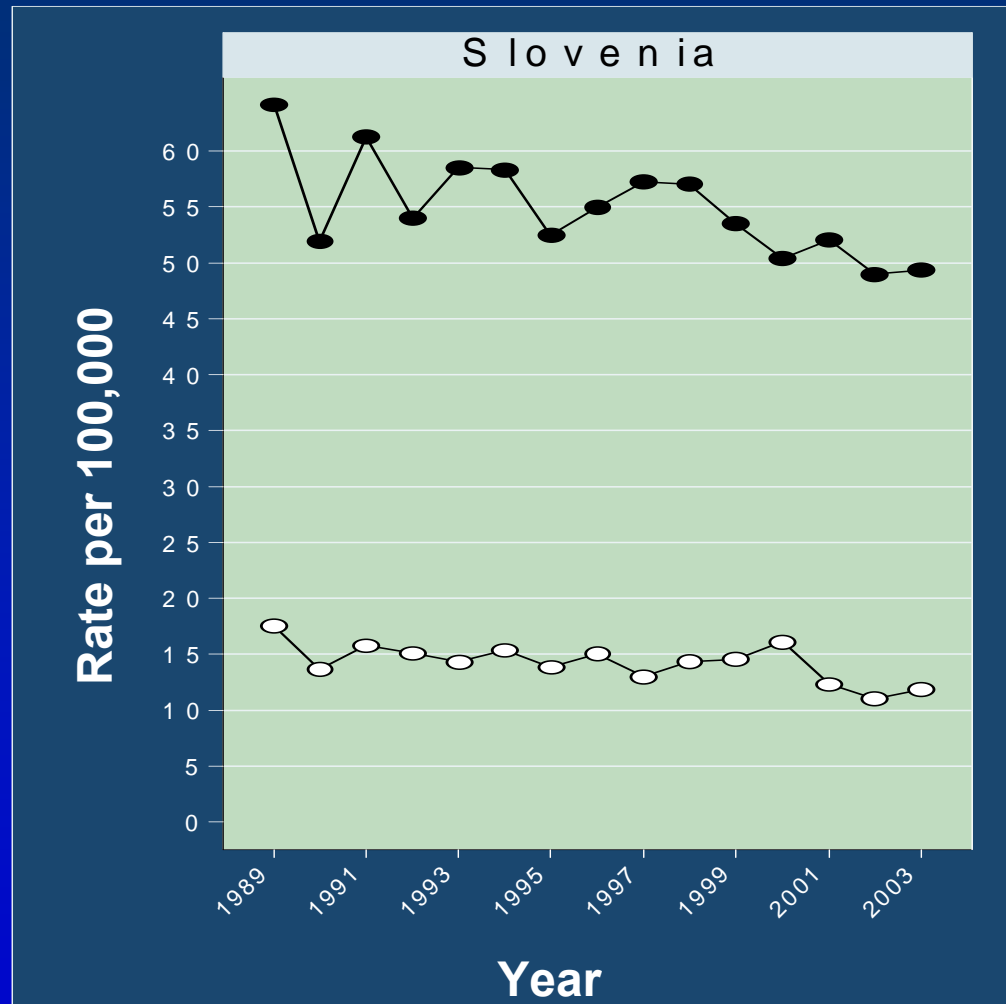
Deliberate Self Harm: person-based three-year rolling average rates per 100,000 for men in 8 European regions



Suicide: three-year rolling average rates per 100,000 for men (●) and women(○)



Suicide: three-year rolling average rates per 100,000 for men (●) and women(○)



For males a significant association was found between the rate of change in DSH rates at regional level and suicide rates nationally ($r=0.71$, $p<0.05$), but not for females ($r=0.57$, $p=0.14$).



Evidence based interventions and suicide prevention programmes

- Awareness and education
- Screening
- Treatment interventions
- Restricting access to lethal means
- Media guidelines

Awareness and Education – Multi-faceted Community based Intervention Programmes *European Alliance Against Depression*

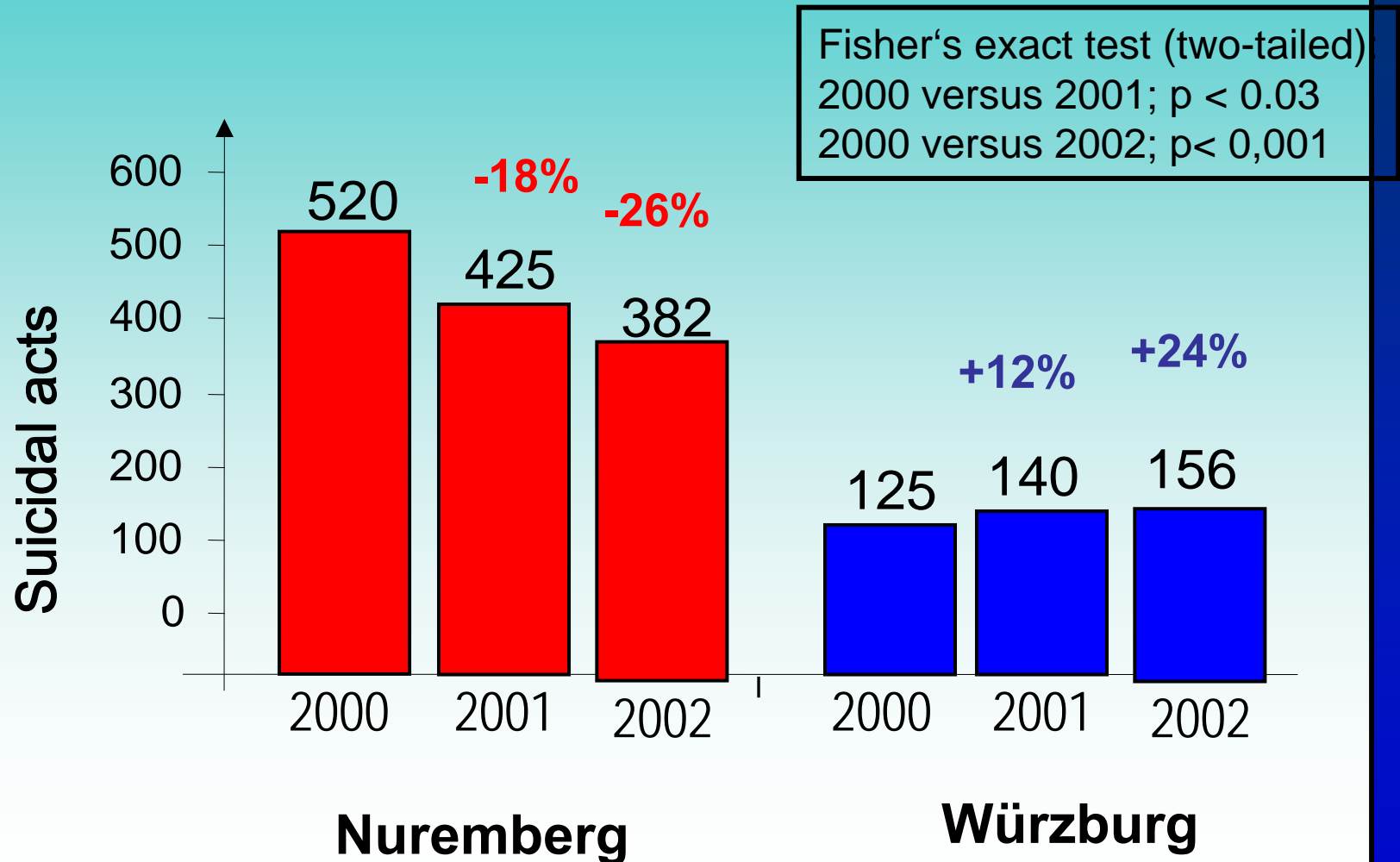
- 1) Specialist workshops with General Practitioners and support through different materials.
- 2) Training of community facilitators (e.g. teachers, social workers, police, clergy, local media)
 - Train-The-Trainer model + Gatekeeper training
- 3) Support for high risk groups as well as self-help activities.
- 4) Public awareness campaign informing about depression and suicidal behaviour

Baseline and outcome measures:

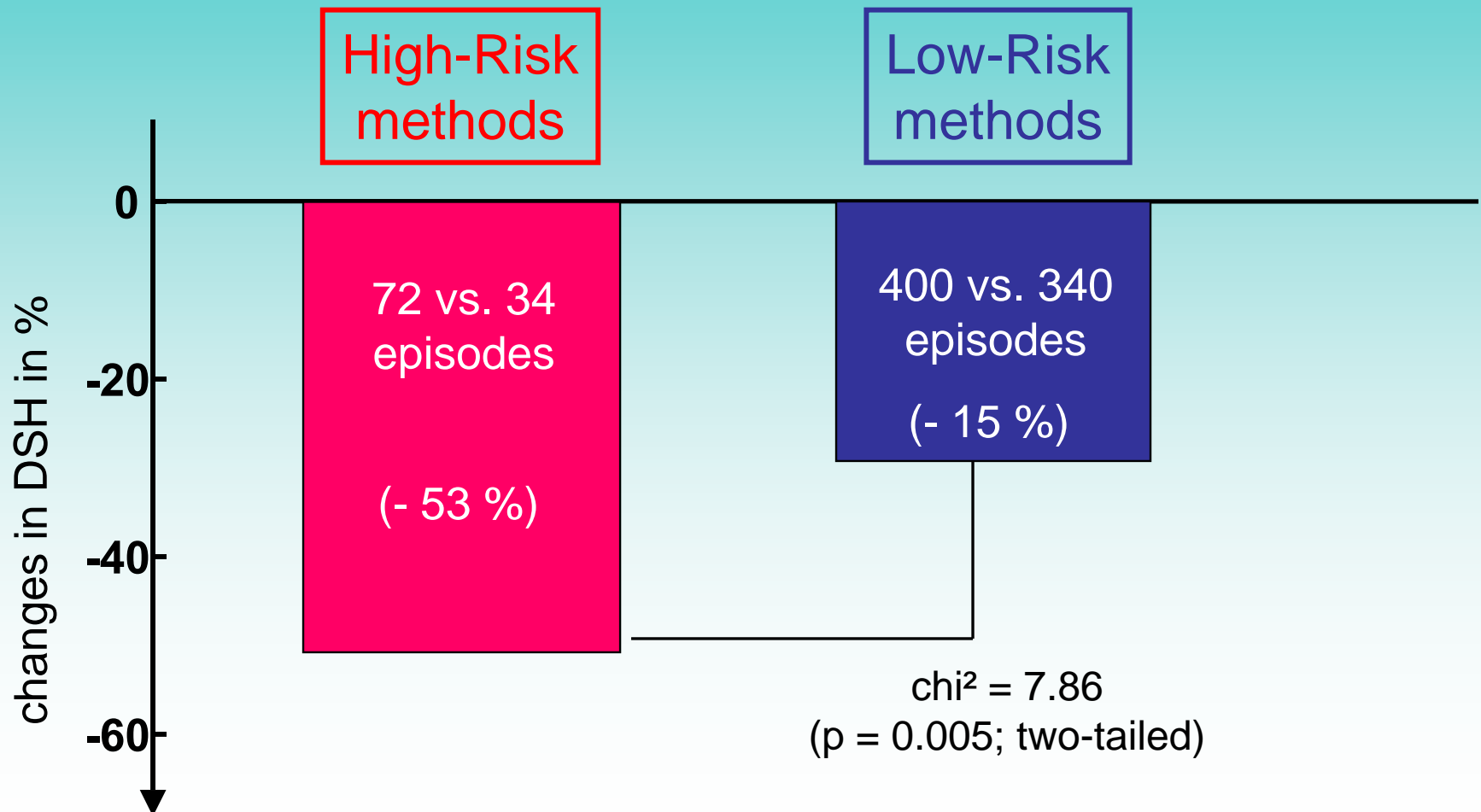
- Completed suicides + Deliberate self harm (DSH)
- Changes in the public opinion with regard to depression and suicidal behaviour

Effectiveness of the four-level approach based on the outcomes of the original pilot-study

Suicidal acts: Nuremberg- Würzburg baseline

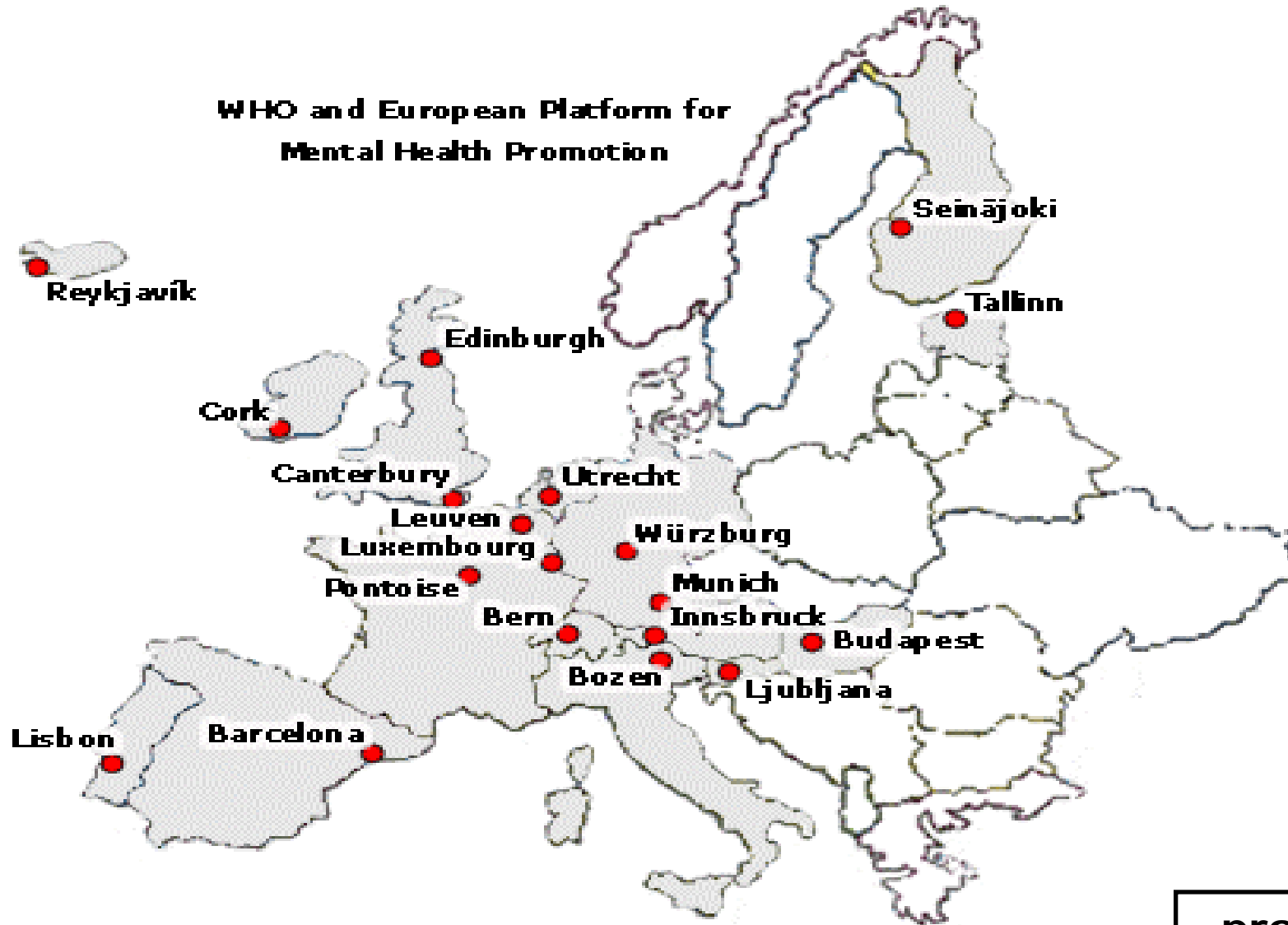


Effectiveness of the four-level community based intervention study Deliberate Self Harm in Nuremberg Baseline vs. follow-up



European Alliance Against Depression (EAAD)

WHO and European Platform for Mental Health Promotion



project centre
(Leipzig)

Screening

Screening to identify at-risk individuals and direct them to treatment

- Effectiveness of screening for depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm and suicide risk primarily investigated in US and Canada
- Target populations in which screening resulted in positive effects: high-school students, adolescents in general, juvenile offenders, adults in primary health care settings
- New EC funded intervention programme including screening of self harm / suicide risk in adolescents aged 13-17: *Saving and Empowering Young Lives in Europe (SEYLE)*
 - Consortium: 11 EU countries
 - ProfScreen: Early identification of mental health problems, incl. anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicidal behaviour



Treatment interventions for deliberate self harm (DSH) patients

Update of systematic review of the efficacy of psychosocial and pharmacological treatments for DSH patients in preventing repetition by *Hawton et al.*

Main outcomes:

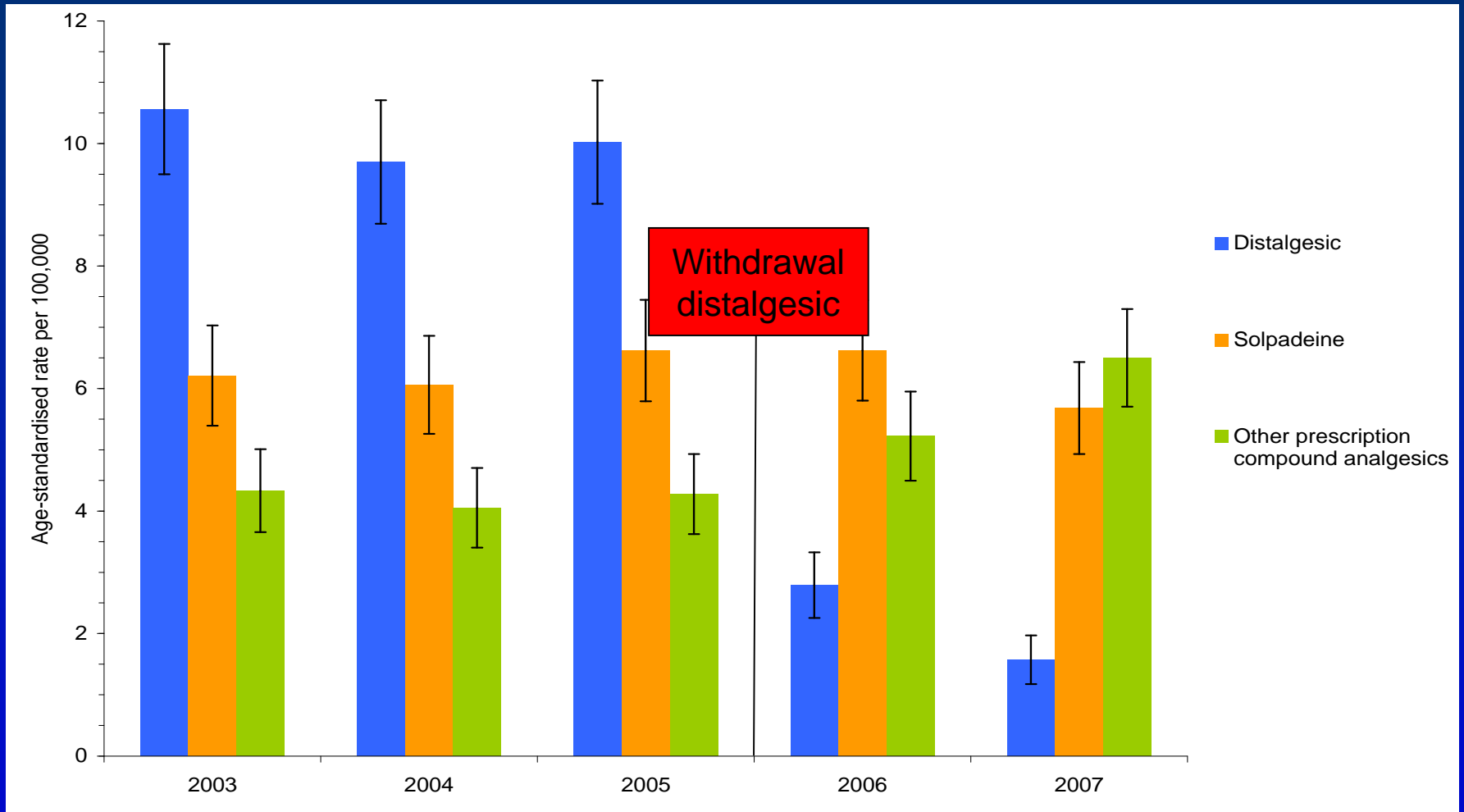
- Improved methodological quality of RCTs
- Consistent evidence for effectiveness of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Problem-Solving Therapy and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy in reducing repeated DSH
- These treatments also showed beneficial effects on suicidal ideation, depression, hopelessness, problem-solving

Restricting access to lethal means

Consistent research evidence supporting the effectiveness of implementing measures to restrict access to lethal means in order to reduce both fatal and non-fatal suicidal behaviour:

- Barriers on bridges – significant reductions in suicide with no indications of substitution effects
- Withdrawal of the prescription painkiller co-proxamol in the UK and Ireland (distalgesic) – significant reductions in suicide and deliberate self harm, with little evidence for substitution effects
- Restricting paracetamol pack size – Positive outcomes of initial studies not confirmed in recently published studies

National rate of intentional drug overdose presentations to hospital in Ireland involving distalgesic, other prescription compound analgesics and solpadeine, before and after the withdrawal of distalgesic





PRESS RELEASE, June 2009

European Medicines Agency recommends withdrawal of dextropropoxyphene containing medicines

Finalising a review of the safety and efficacy of dextropropoxyphene-containing medicines, the European Medicines Agency's Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) concluded that their risks, particularly the risk of potentially fatal overdose, are greater than their benefits. The Committee therefore recommended that the marketing authorisations for these medicines be withdrawn across the European Union. The withdrawal will be gradual to allow time for the safe transfer of patients to appropriate alternative therapies, in line with national recommendations.

Dextropropoxyphene is a painkiller used to treat acute and chronic pain. It has been available as a prescription-only medicine for about 40 years, either on its own or in combination primarily with paracetamol, as tablets, capsules, suppositories and solutions for injection.

There have been concerns over intentional and accidental fatal overdose with dextropropoxyphene-containing medicines for some years and a number of Member States had carried out independent safety reviews of these medicines authorised in their territories. These reviews have led to different conclusions, with some Member States withdrawing dextropropoxyphene-containing medicines from, and others maintaining them on, their markets...



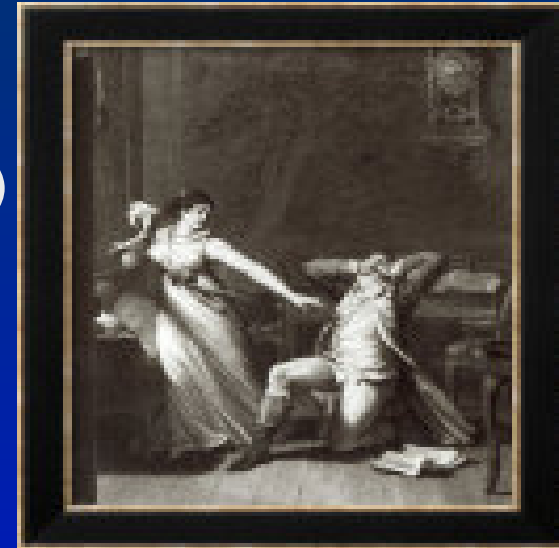
Media guidelines

**Research into effects of
media reporting of suicide**

Historical evidence

“Die leiden des jungen Werther” – JW Goethe (1774)

- Indications for imitative suicides in other cities in Germany, Italy, Denmark.



Marilyn Monroe (1962)

- 12% increase in suicide in the month following her suicide.

Media guidelines

Media guidelines – Key elements:

- Take the opportunity to educate the public about suicide
- Avoid language which sensationalizes or normalizes suicide, or presents it as a solution to problems
- Avoid prominent placement and undue repetition of stories about suicide
- Avoid explicit description of the method used in a completed or attempted suicide
- Word headlines carefully
- Exercise caution in using photographs or video footage
- Take particular care in reporting celebrity suicides
- Show due consideration for people bereaved by suicide
- Provide information about where to seek help
- Recognize that media professionals themselves may be affected by stories about suicide

Media guidelines

Effects of implementation of media guidelines:

- Switzerland:
 - Reduction of suicide stories published on front page of newspapers from 20% to 4%
 - Reduction of stories with sensational headlines from 62% to 25%
- Austria:
 - Reduction of total number of suicide stories
 - Shift from detailed front page articles to short reports in inside newspaper pages
 - Significant reduction in the number of suicides
 - Effects were stronger in regions with more intensive media collaboration



Media report on suicide case after launch of media guidelines

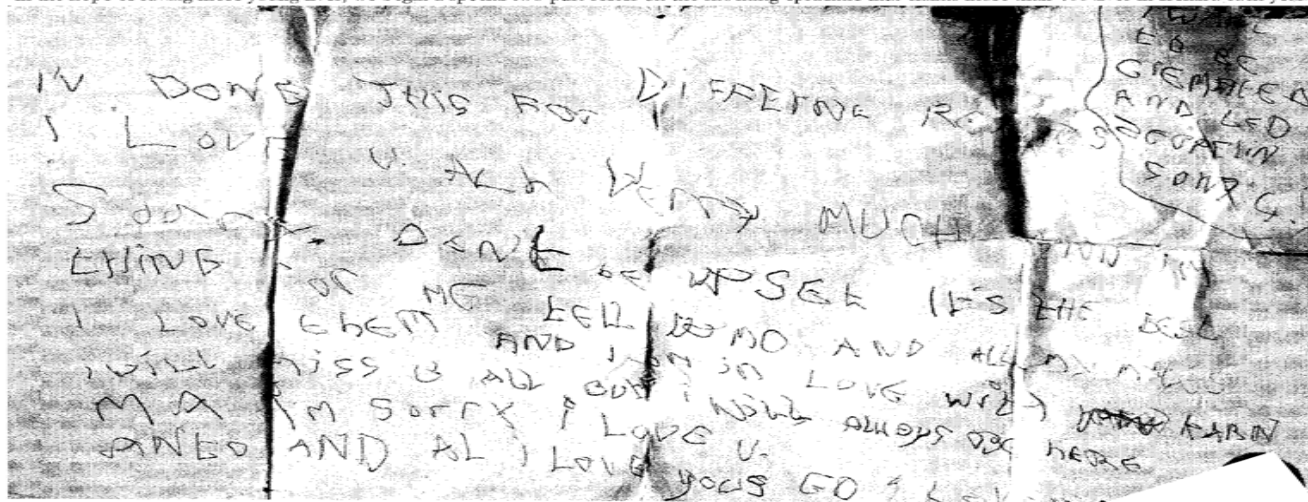
Irish Examiner, 22nd March 2007

Front page

THE HEARTBREAK OF SUICIDE

‘I’V DONE THIS FOR DIFFERENT REASONS. I LOVE U ALL VERRY MUCH AND IM SORRY. DONT BE UPSET. IT’S THE BEST FOR ME TELL MA AND ALL ME MATES I LOVE THEM AND I’M IN LOVE WITH KARIN I WILL MISS U ALL BUT I WILL ALWAYS BE HERE MA IM SORRY. I LOVE YOU. ANTO AND AL I LOVE YOURS GOD LOVE U. (POSTSCRIPT) I WANT TO BE CREMATED AND LED ZEPPELIN SONG 4.’

THESE are the words 16-year-old Darren Bolger wrote before he took his life. Now, as his mother brings his note to the public in the hope of saving more young lives, we begin a special two-part series on the shocking epidemic that claims more than 400 lives in Ireland each year.



The role of media in increasing awareness of suicidal behaviour and suicide prevention

- Increase awareness of risk and protective factors associated with suicidal behaviour
- Increase awareness of relevant services available for depressed and suicidal people
- By providing information on facts related to depression and suicidal behaviour stigma associated with suicide and related mental health problems can be reduced

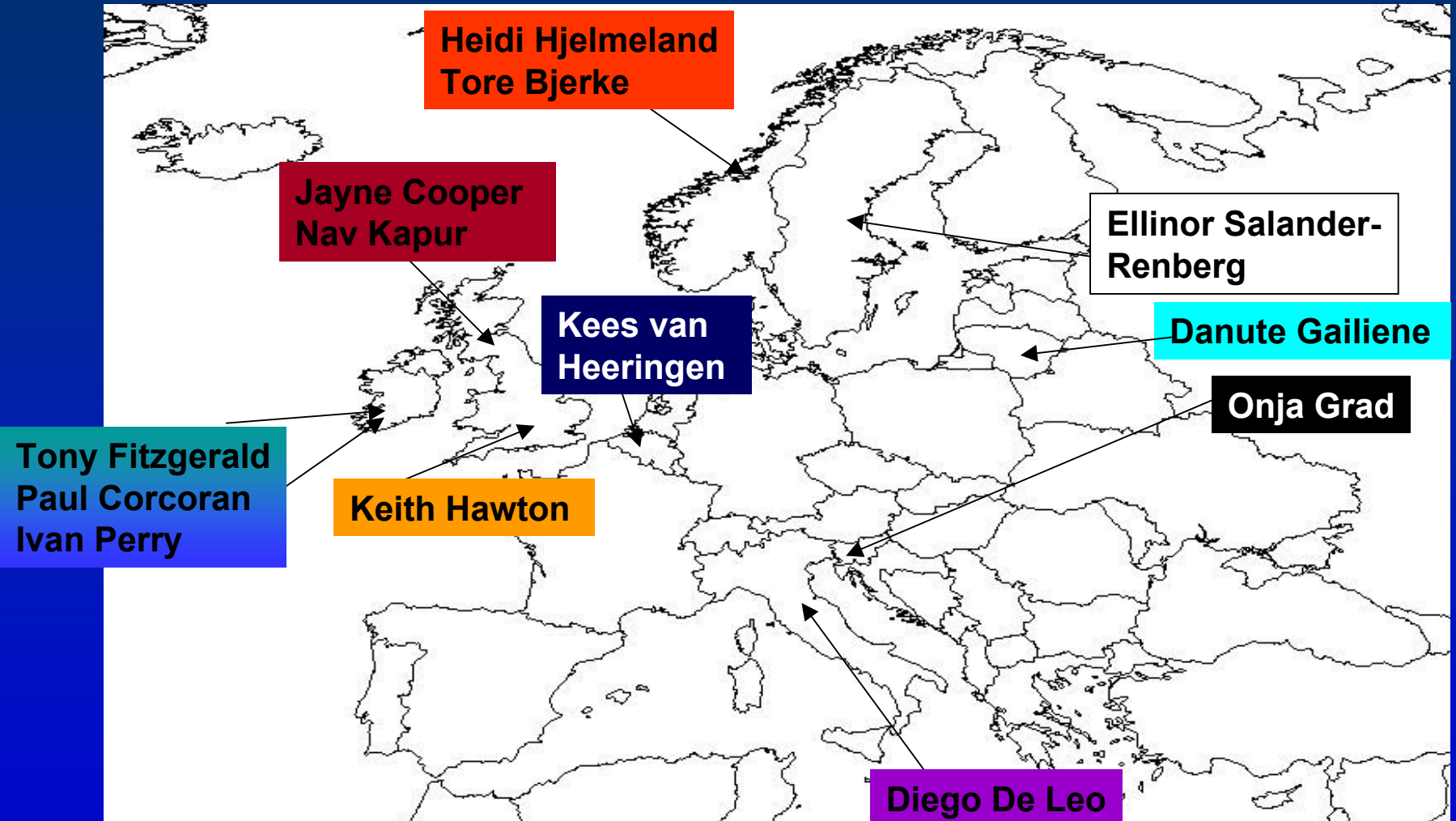
“I would be careful not to go into graphic description about the mode of the suicide because I think that’s voyeuristic and ultimately unhelpful”

Anne Dempsey,
Freelance journalist, Ireland



Acknowledgments:

Participants in the Network on International Collaboration on Evidence in Suicide Prevention (NICE-SP)



Thank you!

