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#### **Suicide prevention in Gotland**

SIR: Williams & Goldney (*BJP*, November 1994, **165**, 692) are quite right. Moving averages will occlude dramatic effects of an intervention. However, in the case of Rutz *et al*'s (1992) work, the reason that preceding falls in suicide rate seem smaller than the fall during the GP's educational programme is that the former was measured *every year*, whereas the latter drop was spread over *five years*.

As only four post-intervention data points were reported, the smoothest plot possible across the intervention is from a 4-year moving average. Taking Williams & Goldney's advice and ignoring all data from the intervention years themselves, it remains clear that there is no long-term effect of the programme on already-falling suicide rates.

Rutz *et al* (1992) implied that the short-term drop in rates during the programme, followed by a rise, might be evidence of a transient effect; the reader can best judge the likelihood of this by examination of previous annual fluctuations in the raw rates shown in my last letter (*BJP*, August 1993, **163**, 260).

I commiserate with any reader attempting to follow a discussion interrupted by intervals of anything up to 14 months of silence.

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