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Sleeping is a legitimate form of criticism.
What should I talk about?

-Don’t-
‘State the bleeding obvious’
Introduction

Do airlines really understand pilot suicide?

or more to the point

Does anyone understand pilot suicide?
Definition

**Suicide by pilot** - describes aviation disasters in which **pilots** deliberately crash or attempt to crash an aircraft as a way to kill themselves and sometimes passengers on board or people on the ground.
The action of killing oneself intentionally by someone who happens to be a pilot

So now we all know the definition of pilot suicide
Pilot suicide is not new
Kamikaze – Divine Wind

During World War II

3,860 kamikaze pilots died

Started October 1944

Approx 12 a day

War with Japan ended 15th Aug 1945
But why do Pilots commit suicide?
Flight Radar

Barcelona to Dusseldorff
Heads of State
If a Germanwings had happened in Africa or South America would there have been so much of an outcry?
“The only difference between a suicide and martyrdom really is the amount of press coverage”

Chuck Palahniuk – US Author
During his training and recurrent checks, his professional level was judged to be above standard by his instructors and examiners.
28 year-old Andreas Lubitz, a German had been flying for Germanwings since September 2013 and was qualified, trusted and showed no signs of physical or psychological distress before the crash.

Not entirely true
He went on to say......

“You can never exclude such an individual event, no system in the world could manage to do that.”

That’s debateable
It was reported that Lubitz

- Was concerned about deteriorating vision;
- Suffering from burn-out and depression;
- Medical records revealed that he was suicidal and underwent psychotherapy before he got his pilot's license;

Passed his annual medical examination in the summer 2014, but the examination only tests physical health, not psychological health.
We’d rather know about it!

So something can be done
“I am constantly torn between killing myself and killing everyone around me”

David Levithan – US Author
“By 4 o’clock I have discounted suicide in favour of killing everyone else in the entire world instead”

Warren Ellis – English Author
So what do the FAA say?
According to EASA rules

Pilots must remain at their “assigned station” throughout the flight, “unless absence is necessary for the performance of duties in connection with the operation or for physiological needs.”
Following the accident, EASA made a recommendation to airlines that two authorised persons must be present in the flight deck at all times.
Would recommending that a member of Cabin Crew take the seat of a pilot who needed to leave the flight deck be a deterrent?
So what can be done?
First the dilemma
Cockpit doors pose an unavoidable dilemma: They have to be impregnable, but there must be a way to override them. How can this be achieved?
Keyless entry

Finger Print

Card Swipe

Iphone App

Retina Recognition

Combination

Voice Recognition
Pilot Suicide - What are the first signs?
Suicide is one of the most serious outcomes of someone who is suffering from severe depression.

The WHO estimates that some 350 million people worldwide are affected by depression.

Common signs of depression include:
Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much;
Difficulty concentrating;
Feeling of hopelessness or helplessness;
Loss of appetite or significant increase in appetite;
Increase in irritability, aggression or anger;
Increase in alcohol consumption and/or reckless behaviour;
Thoughts that your life is not worth living;
Become increasingly withdrawn from friends & family;
Appear anxious and agitated;
Have sudden mood swings;
Talk and act in a way that suggests their life has no sense of purpose;
Lose interest in most things, including their appearance;
Put their affairs in order, such as sorting out possessions or making a will.
And more...
As Fatigue and Depression are so closely linked, should we as an industry, be paying more attention to Fatigue Risk Management to protect mental health?
People who have suffered depression

Brad Pitt - US Actor
Buzz Aldrin - US Astronaut
Jim Carrey - Canadian Actor and Comedian
Agatha Christie - British Author
Winston Churchill - former British Prime Minister
Johnny Depp - American Actor
Charles Dickens - British Author
Lady Gaga - US Singer
Kylie Minogue - Australian Singer
Isaac Newton - British Physicist
J K Rowling - British Author
A trial was carried out that involved 6 men and 6 women, aged between 30 & 64, all diagnosed with treatment-resistant depression.
Magic Mushrooms

Psilocybin

Serotonin Receptors
How does an airline detect a pilot who is suffering from depression?
You can’t see mental illness

To detect pilot with suicidal thoughts is near impossible
(Professor Robert Bor)
FAA medical requirements for pilots

Pilots undergo a medical every 6 to 12 months depending on age.

Pilot records are not released as they are covered by privacy laws.

Doctors can ask about psychological condition as part of their assessment and can defer any examination where they believe further testing is required.

The pilot must self-disclose the information asked and give explanations to all yes answers.

The Doctor will use this self-disclosure to ask further questions about mental health issues.
One unnamed pilot told a leading newspaper that he will not say anything that could lead to a suspension of his license?

“I need my job.”
So does a new ‘line in the sand’ needs to be drawn with regard to Doctor – Pilot confidentiality?
The FAA will upgrade training for its ME’s to spot potential psychological issues in pilots, but does not plan to introduce specific testing.
Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US

Each year 42,773 Americans die by suicide
Suicide costs the US $44 Billion annually.

For every suicide there are 25 attempts.
Let’s look at suicide rates 2014

The male suicide rate is more than 3.5 times higher than the female rate.

33,268 males compared to 9,505 females.

White males accounted for 7 of 10 suicides in 2014.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
41%, of men who contemplated suicide never spoke to anyone about their feelings, including:
- medical professionals;
- family members or;
- friends.

Of these men, the reasons for not talking about these feelings included:
- not wanting people to worry about them (32%);
- not wanting to talk about their feelings (29%);
- not wanting to cause a fuss (24%).
TOP 10 JOBS WITH THE HIGHEST RATES OF SUICIDE

- Farming, fishing, and forestry: 84.5
- Construction and extraction: 53.3
- Installation, maintenance, and repair: 47.9
- Production: 34.5
- Architecture and engineering: 32.2
- Protective service: 30.5
- Arts, design, sports, entertainment, and media: 24.3
- Computer and mathematical: 23.3
- Transportation and material moving: 22.3
- Management: 20.3

Figures are numbers per 100,000 people

SOURCES: CDC.gov
It would be good to have more of a mix in general, but mainly because of safety. "Women are much less likely to commit suicide than men” and she therefore believes having more female pilots would be safer for the passengers.

(Psychiatrist Gabriella Stoppe)
So are airlines presently doing enough?
Suicide is a latent hazard within airlines (present or potential, but not evident or active)
• Loss of Control
• Runway Excursion
• CFIT
• Runway Incursion
• Airborne Conflict
• Ground Handling Accidents
• Fire
CAST

- Runway excursions,
- CFIT
- Approach and landing accidents,
- Loss of control,
- Runway incursions,
- Weather,
- Turbulence,
- Icing,
- Cargo-related accidents,
- Maintenance,
The CEO of a large US regional airline at an airline Law Conference stated – ‘the thing that keeps me awake at night is the thought of pilot suicide’

He further reported that over a 10 year period they averaged one pilot suicide per year
EASA ensure that European operators promote the implementation of peer support groups to provide a process for pilots, their families and peers to report and discuss personal and mental health issues, with the assurance that information will be kept in-confidence in a just-culture work environment, and that pilots will be supported as well as guided with the aim of providing them with help, ensuring flight safety and allowing them to return to flying duties, where applicable.
At present self-reporting and peer-reporting are airline’s primary defense against psychological problems in the cockpit.

So will this work in the future?
A former Head of Safety for a leading US airline said that in 2011, 7 pilots committed suicide.

The airline then started a confidential programme to identify pilots who may appear depressed or worse, called ‘Wingman’.

2014 - 1 suicide
2015 - 2 suicide

White males aged between 45 to 56
HIMS is specific to commercial pilots and coordinates the identification, treatment and return to the cockpit of impaired aviators. It is an industry-wide effort in which companies, pilot unions, and FAA work together to preserve careers and further air safety.
Peer Support Advisors - BA Pilots
Launched in this Summer
Independent Healthcare Provider – Professor Robert Bor

Our friends at Virgin Atlantic Airways have introduced a very similar scheme
But

What about other aviation organisation employees
Aircraft Technicians
Ground Workers
Or other similar industries
So what about the future and will pilot suicide be a consideration?
Pilot suicide is incredibly rare and it has been reported that in the past 40 years, pilot suicide-murders caused 591 deaths in 11 separate incidents.

Leaving MH370 out of the statistics.
## Recent ‘alleged’ pilot suicide events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flight</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAM 470</td>
<td>Maputo - Angola</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27 passenger and 6 crew</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>203 passenger and 14 crew</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt Air</td>
<td>LAX - Cairo</td>
<td>Nantucket</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>203 passenger and 14 crew</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97 passengers and 6 crew</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Silk Air 185</td>
<td>Jakarta - Singapore</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>97 passengers and 6 crew</td>
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Let’s put this in perspective.....

Pilot suicide over a 40 year period allegedly resulted in 591 deaths (103 fatalities on Silk Air 185, it is debateable if indeed it was ‘pilot suicide’)

In the UK a country of 64 million, some 600+ people die annually from falling down stairs or steps
The probability of death as a result of falling from steps while boarding an aircraft is 28 times greater than flying in the aircraft.
So what about the future?
"The DLR continues to deliver to its passengers one of the most reliable and punctual rail services in Britain"
Pilotless Aircraft (2012)
They are already out there....
Your guess is as good as mine!!

But, ultimately it will be down to the passengers. Are they more worried about the rogue pilot or flying on an aircraft without any pilot?
So......

how can
YOU help?
Brokers and Underwriters who meet with their insured airlines, could and should ask about the policy the airline has in place, to identify those pilots who maybe considering suicide as well as other hazards... e.g. alcoholism, laser attacks and bird strikes
Finally……

So do airlines really understand pilot suicide? Not totally, but I believe with the help of their pilot community, there is progress, certainly with the major carriers. Suicide should not be a taboo subject.

Also, it is not only pilots that commit suicide, but cabin crew, for which there are little or no statistics and remember other airline employees too.

Talking openly and often would be a great start.
Nearly 88,000 people (approximately 62,000 men and 26,000 women) die from alcohol-related causes annually, making alcohol the 4th leading preventable cause of death in the USA.