Background

Suicide statistics:
- 11th leading cause of death in the United States.
- In 2007: 34,598 suicides in the U.S (suicide rate: 11.5 per 100,000).
- In 2008: 8.3 million adults aged 18 or older (3.7 percent of the adult population) had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year, 2.3 million (1.0 percent) made a suicide plan, and 1.1 million (0.5 percent) attempted suicide.

Survivors of suicide:
- When a person commits suicide it affects many lives including, family, friends, caretakers, and clinicians. These groups of people that survive someone’s suicide are known as survivors of suicide.
- It is estimated that for every completed suicide there are at least 6 survivors of suicide.
- Based on this estimate, approximately 6 million American became survivors of suicide in the last 25 years.

Suicide and health care
- Most individuals who attempt or complete suicide have received medical care around the time of this event.
- 45% of patients who commit suicide had contact with their primary care physician and 20% with mental health professionals within one month of their death.
- Furthermore psychiatry residents are likely to experience one suicide during training, with estimates ranging from around 32% to 61%.

Suicide and the Golden Gate Bridge
- The Golden Gate Bridge is the number one suicide site in the world. Fatality rate: 99%
- Bridge suicide counts are based on bodies recovered, which by 2008 was over 1,300.
- Bodies washed out to sea, jumpers witnessed but not found, and unclaimed cars in the parking lot are not counted. The actual number of deaths is probably closer to 2,000.

Advantages of teaching with films
- Movies show vivid examples of psychopathology in life context.
- Films might enhance learning as they present visual images, which can be superior to the spoken word.
- Movies stimulate a reflective attitude in the learner and addresses the humanistic perspective and help students understand patients and help students understand suicide.

Description

“The Bridge” Documentary
- Eric Steel used 10-to-12-person crews to train his cameras day and night on this landmark.
- They filmed the full expanse of the bridge from January through December 2004.
- He taped 23 of the 24 suicides that occurred that year.
- He then filmed over 100 hours of interviews with families and friends who had survived the suicide of a loved one, with a suicide survivor, and witness to persons who jumped.
- The movie shows several interlaced interviews alternated with footage of the Golden Gate bridge with different family members, friends, and witnesses for several victims of suicide. The authors simplified the format by discussing each aspect separately.

“Is Suicide Bereavement Different? A Reassessment of the literature”
- Kevin Philip, Jennifer Sullivan, and Elizabeth Thompson.

Kevin
- 22 year old whose parents report that he had planned his suicide for months including where to do it. He took a camera with a backpack and took several pictures before jumping. His family had been depressed for a long time and had been hospitalized and treated several times for suicide attempts. He was explained that they thought suicide was a sin. During his last months of life he accepted his family, but had left his car. He was unable to keep a relationship. His parents were very supportive and reported an extensive history of alcoholism in the family. Witnesses say he said “This is a long way down before he jumped”

Philip
- 52 year old whose sister committed suicide, became homeless after losing his job and was struck by severe depression and insomnia. Since his unemployment he was uninsured and did not have access to psychiatric care. One of his friends, who also suffered from depression, gave him some medications that did not work for her for him to try and asked him to see a psychiatrist. His depression continued to worsen and eventually he told his friend that he was planning to commit suicide. His friend admits that, although he was concerned, he was overcome/decided and did not deal with it. She never heard from him again until she found out she had jumped off the bridge.

Elizabeth
- Phillip was 23 of the 24 suicides that occurred that year. They filmed the full expanse of the bridge from January through December 2004. Eric Steel used 10-to-12-person crews to train his cameras day and night on this landmark.

References
- The Bridge, directed by Eric Steel. IFC Films, 2006
- Lisa was a 44 year old who was very introverted. Shortly after the death of her father, she had her first psychotic break with severe paranoia and severe hallucinations. Her schizophrenia worsened through the years and was difficult to control, and eventually she ended up living in an assisted living facility. Shortly before her suicide her roommate killed herself and the mother’s narrative, she could have left behind by family as they did not want to deal with it any longer. They were no overt signs that she was going to carry this out.

Conclusions
- It is of great importance to teach medical students and psychiatry residents not just about suicide assessment and management, but also other areas encompassing suicide such as postvention and survival of suicide.
- Evidence suggest that movies are superior than spoken language in regards to learning and knowledge retention as they provide emotionally meaningful experiences to the learners.
- The Bridge offers a unique access of knowledge to the teaching of the different aspects not often discussed when teaching suicide. Some important concepts that can be discussed and taught after the film are suicide risk factors and protective factors, Survivors of Suicide, stages of grief and guilt and stigma toward suicide.
- The authors propose that this movie should be complementary to the suicide curriculum of medical students and residents.