

General Motors blasted (again) for suicide TV commercial, marginalization of depression

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Anger in the mental health and suicide prevention community has grown following a General Motors spokesperson's statement this week that the company has received "more than a handful, but not a tsunami" of complaints over a Super Bowl television ad that depicted a suicidal leap from a bridge -- and that the company intends to air the commercial again during the Academy Awards on February 25th.

GM is blasted again for its "suicide commercial." See the entire advertisement by clicking here. "The GM commercial is recklessly irresponsible," said Michael Fitzpatrick, executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the nation's largest organization that focuses on serious mental illnesses, including depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder. "How many national organizations does it take to change their minds?"

GM's response has contrasted with that of Mars, Inc. which quickly pulled a Super Bowl advertisement for Snickers candy bars, following objections from the gay community. Fitzpatrick attributed the difference to the traditional marginalization of mental health concerns, rooted in stigma and discrimination.

"Suicide kills. Depression kills. Obsessive-compulsive disorder can kill," he declared. "But GM sees those kinds of concerns simply as a cute, advertising gimmick. What does it say about the company's concern for public health?"

In the ad, a robot who drops a bolt on the assembly line is fired because of GM's "obsession" with quality. He is unable to hold another job and grows increasingly depressed. Eventually, he jumps off a bridge.

In a letter to GJM on February 7, NAMI warned that concerns over depictions of suicide in mass media have been raised in the past by the U.S. Surgeon General, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Institute of Mental Health -- as well as groups like NAMI -- because of the risk of "suicide contagion," the clinical term for "copy cat" suicides.

In addition, suicide rates increase as unemployment rises. GM has engaged in major restructuring that has caused many employees to lose their jobs, NAMI noted in its letter. "The irony is unbelievably callous," making the ad "even more distasteful."

View the GJM commercial [here](#).

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