

Catalyst Grant: Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries among Public Safety Personnel

Instructions:

The [Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries \(PTSI\) among Public Safety Personnel](#) (PSP) Catalyst grant was developed to strengthen and expand the evidence base needed to inform current and future policies, practices and programs related to PTSI in PSP. This funding opportunity will improve the mental wellness and resilience of Canada's PSP through innovative research.

As outlined in the [conditions of funding](#), funded teams are required to facilitate knowledge exchange among stakeholders and catalyst grant holders by participating in a workshop. This template is therefore provided, and the resulting report will support end-of-grant knowledge translation activities and the workshop on April 30 – May 1, 2020 in Calgary, AB.

The completed report is due by **March 16, 2020**.

Project Title: Pan Canadian Public Safety Personnel: Ongoing Knowledge Translation and Strategic Development

Authors:

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Priority Research Area: N/A

Relevant PSP Population(s): Police (municipal, provincial, RCMP)
Correctional workers (federal, provincial)
Firefighters
Paramedics
Call centre operators/dispatchers

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What is the issue?

(max 100 words)

In 2016/17, the first wide-scale, pan-Canadian survey of Public Safety Personnel (PSP) was conducted. Of the 8,520 PSP who began the survey, 4,772 completed the survey—informally known as "AX1"—in its entirety. Participants represented multiple sectors (municipal/provincial police, RCMP, paramedics, firefighters, corrections workers, and call centre

operators/dispatchers). Included in this substantial dataset are variables pertaining to: demographics, mental health symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress), substance use, work experiences (e.g., operational stress, supports, stigma), interpersonal relationships, and personality (e.g., risk and resiliency variables). This provided a wealth of data left to be analyzed and reported beyond the initial publications.

What was the aim of the study?

(max 150 words)

The primary aim of this project was to produce 8-10 additional peer-reviewed papers from the extensive AX1 dataset over the course of the 1-year funding period. This allowed for in-depth examination of the relationships among numerous demographic, mental health, personality, organizational, and interpersonal variables, both broadly and within specific PSP sectors. This facilitated creation of a more comprehensive knowledge base pertaining to the symptoms of mental health injuries across and within numerous PSP sectors, as well as further identification of risk and resiliency variables. The Catalyst Grant extended the value of the initial support obtained for the AX1 data collection considerably by allowing for production of a more substantial body of literature, all available as open-access, to both broaden and deepen the current knowledge base regarding PSP mental health in Canada.

How was the study conducted?

(max 100 words)

The study consisted of a series of retrospective analyses of data from the AX1 dataset. Members of the study team worked to identify knowledge gaps in the literature, and areas of particular interest were identified through engagement with PSP knowledge users and stakeholders across multiple sectors. A series of statistical and qualitative analyses were conducted as appropriate to each particular sub-study's research questions.

What did the study find?

(max 200 words)

The following are some of the major outcomes reported in individual publications that arose from the extensive analyses of the AX1 dataset:

- (1) Despite being identified as risk factors for mental disorders, levels of intolerance of uncertainty (IU) and anxiety sensitivity (AS) were low in PSP as compared to general clinical samples, regardless of the presence or absence of signs of mental disorders.
- (2) PSP with previous military experience were more likely to screen positive for mental disorders than those with no service history with the armed forces.
- (3) PSP who screened positive for insomnia were 3.43–6.96 times more likely to screen positive for a mental disorder. The lowest levels of sleep disturbance were found among firefighters and municipal/provincial police.
- (4) The prevalence of mental health challenges for provincial correctional workers appears to be higher than in federal correctional workers in Canada.
- (5) Comparing PSP groups, correctional workers reported the most mental health knowledge, least stigma, highest intentions to use mental health services, and the highest positive screens for mental disorders, whereas the opposite was true for firefighters.

What are the implications of this study?

(max 100 words)

The initial goal of producing an additional 8-10 peer-reviewed publications from the AX1 dataset has already been exceeded, which has extended the knowledge base about PSP mental health in Canada. Manuscripts pertaining to a wide variety of topics have been published, including but not limited to: differences in sleep quality and its association with PSP mental health; differences among PSP sectors in mental health knowledge, attitudes, stigma, and help-seeking behaviours; prior military service as a predictor of mental health symptoms among PSP; PSP perceptions of "fitness to work;" and

associations between trauma exposure and physical conditions experienced by PSP.

What are the key messages?

(max 100 words)

Collectively, the additional findings that have been produced from the AX1 dataset as a result of this Catalyst Grant have demonstrated that there remains considerable untapped knowledge about risk and resiliency factors in PSP mental health. Disparities were also noted among PSP professions with regard to numerous mental health outcome and predictor variables, some of which were unexpected, suggesting that there is still much more research that needs to be done in this area. The findings also point to areas for further research with regard to addressing the unique mental health needs of different PSP groups.

Provide a list of potential target audiences for this research

PSP, particularly: municipal/provincial police, RCMP, provincial/federal corrections workers; call centre operators/dispatchers; paramedics, firefighters
Active military and military veterans
Senior PSP leadership and policy-makers
Clinical psychologists
Researchers in psychology/mental health

