



Intelligence

state of the art threat assessment

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Upcoming Events

SARA-V3 Train-the-Trainer Certificate Programme

London, United Kingdom
3 - 4 December 2018

Sexual Violence in Higher Education Conference and Workshop

Calgary, Canada
21 - 23 January 2019

APATAP Conference

Disneyland, Hong Kong
25 - 27 February 2019

Foundational Violence Risk Assessment and Management Workshop

Vancouver, Canada
29 April - 3 May 2019

Editor's Note



education's responsibility to protect and warn their students about violence risk. This case has major implications for both threat assessment professionals and threat assessment teams.

In addition, we have several special announcements. First, ConCEpT Professional Training will be launching a long-awaited online HCR-20 V3 Case Study Training Series in the new year. Second, the annual Asia Pacific Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (APATAP) Conference is being held in Hong Kong between 25-27 February 2019. Third, Protect International is offering new webinar series in collaboration with ConCEpT Professional Training focusing on specialized forms of violence.

We hope Intelligence will continue to provide a forum for you to share and develop your expertise in threat assessment.

We encourage you to contribute and provide feedback.

Sincerely,

Kelly A. Watt, PhD
Director and Threat Assessment Specialist at Protect International Risk and Safety Services

As always, Intelligence will keep you up to date with recent advances in threat assessment from around the globe through knowledge and experiences shared by world-leading experts.

Does asking people about suicidal or violent thoughts actually increase their risk or make them suicidal or violent? This is a commonly asked question in practice with limited consensus about the answer! In this issue, we hear from Dr. Brianne Layden who provides an important research update related to the potential iatrogenic effects of assessing thoughts of suicide and violence.

Dr. Christopher King and Ms. Jill Del Pozzo will provide a legal review about *Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Superior Court*, which is a potential landmark case related to higher

Iatrogenic Effects of Assessing Violent Ideation

Update by Dr. Brianne Layden

Have you ever worried that asking people about their violent ideation (thoughts or intent) – might actually make them violent? This would be a classic example of iatrogenesis, an intervention that is intended to make a situation better but actually makes it worse (e.g., Weiner, 1998). We have spoken with some threat assessment professionals who say they are uncomfortable inquiring about violent ideation for precisely this reason, and similar sentiments are often expressed by participants in our threat assessment trainings. Our standard response is that direct

assessment of violent ideation is consistent with best practices according to the professional literature and with legal duties to take reasonable steps to prevent harm due to violence. But for this research update, I wanted to summarize recent scientific evidence.

I quickly learned that this was going to be a very short update. I could not locate a single study that had been published in any language on the iatrogenic effects of assessing violent ideation. I thought perhaps I used the wrong terms when conducting searches of the electronic databases. To test this, I used the same keywords to search for research on the iatrogenic effects of asking about suicidal ideation, simply substituting “suicide,” “self-injury,” and similar terms for “violence,” “aggression” and so forth. This yielded dozens of studies examining adults and adolescents, healthy and vulnerable people, people assessed only once versus those interviewed on multiple occasions, and people assessed face-to-face versus by questionnaire. Many of the studies were of high quality and published in prestigious journals; indeed, nearly half a dozen of the studies I reviewed were randomized controlled trials, considered the “gold standard” for research of this sort. The relevant literature is actually large enough to have been the focus of both narrative reviews (e.g., Dazzi, Gribble, Wessely, & Fear, 2014) and meta-analytic reviews (e.g., DeCou & Schumann, 2017).



The conclusions were very consistent: there is no meaningful (i.e., substantial or statistically significant) iatrogenic effect on suicidal ideation. Overall, such assessment is not likely to make people have thoughts of self-injury or to engage in self-injurious behavior. This evidence base has been used to support calls for routine assessment of suicidal ideation as part of screening for suicide risk in a wide range of populations and contexts.

In conclusion, the research update on the iatrogenic effects of assessing violent ideation is this: Still nothing. It is somewhat reassuring that the scientific literature has found no evidence of iatrogenesis with respect to assessment of suicidal ideation, as it seems reasonable to infer the same would hold true for assessment of violent ideation. But justifying practice based on inference is certainly less than ideal. I am pleased to see research of the sort described by Mr. Knut Rydal in the last issue of *Intelligence*, which may be able to provide the direct evidence that is sorely needed. I hope that other researchers and threat assessment professionals will begin to address this major gap in the research literature.

Brianne Layden, Protect International Risk and Safety Services

Upcoming Webinars

ConCEpt and Protect International “Wednesday Webinar” Series

Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs: **Emergency Protocols**
12 December 2018

Specialized Violence: **Honor Based Violence**
23 January 2019

Evaluation of Risk for Violence using the HCR-20 V3
4 February - 14 April 2019

Specialized Violence: **Child Abuse and Neglect**
20 February 2019

The Supreme Court of California Continues to Endorse Threat Assessment and Management

Review by Dr. Christopher King and Ms. Jill Del Pozzo

The Supreme Court of California has decided several influential cases in the history of threat assessment and management. In *Johnson v. State* (1968), the Court held that when two parties are in a special relationship, one of the parties may incur a responsibility to do that which is reasonable to (a) protect the other party from foreseeably dangerous third persons, or (b) protect third persons from the other party. An example of a special relationship is that of therapist and client (*Tarasoff v. Regents of the Univ. of Cal.*, 1976). A new example is universities and students when engaged in academic activities.

In *Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Superior Court* (2018), a UCLA student with mental illness and a history of treatment on campus stabbed his peer in class. The victim survived and sued the university for negligence. Certain facts distinguished her case from that of *Tarasoff*, prompting the Court to find a new duty on the part of institutions of higher education “to protect or warn their students from foreseeable violence in the classroom or during curricular activities” (p. 663).

Regents of the Univ. of Cal. (2018) represents a potentially landmark case for the field of threat assessment and management. For one, the Court suggested in dictum the importance of multidisciplinary threat assessment and management protocols and teams as part of a university’s duty of care.

Colleges across the country, including the public universities of California, created threat assessment protocols and multidisciplinary teams to identify and prevent campus violence. Thus, particularly after the Virginia Tech shootings focused national attention on the issue, colleges have been alert to the possibility that students, particularly those with mental health issues, may lash out violently against those around them. Even a comparatively rare classroom attack is a foreseeable occurrence that colleges have been equipping themselves to address for at least the past decade (p. 671).

Moreover, as threat assessment and management professionals continue to provide services in a variety of practice settings (e.g., Meloy & Hoffman, 2014), arguments that such services are reasonable and in fact represent the standard of care outside of education will become increasingly persuasive.

It is also reasonable to predict that *Regents*-type duties will be extended to many other organizations—such as primary and secondary schools and workplaces—on legal grounds. The plaintiff in *Regents* advanced numerous legal theories, including the existence of a special relationship as a student and business invitee, and labor laws about workplace violence. The Court rested its decision on a student-school special relationship, while neither endorsing nor dismissing the alternative legal theories advanced by the plaintiff. The

Court had previously held that school districts must reasonably protect their high school students from sexual harassment (*C.A. v. William S. Hart Union High School Dist.*, 2012), noting the special relationship-supporting factors of compulsory attendance and authority of school personnel. Thus, extension of the *Regents* duty to K–12 undoubtedly just awaits the right fact pattern. While generalization of such a duty to workplaces is more complicated, there are many legal theories and policy arguments that could be brought to bear by a plaintiff seeking this outcome.

Finally, the Court’s prior precedent regarding violence risk and threat assessment and management has proven quite influential on judges and legislatures outside of California. For example, in the decades since *Tarasoff* was decided, almost all states have come to mandate or allow mental health professionals to disclose information about their potentially violent clients (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018). The Court’s identifiable victim rule from *Thompson v. County of Alameda* (1980) is also now found in many other states’ duty to protect laws. Thus, school administrators beyond the Golden State would be wise to closely monitor national practice and legal trends post-*Regents*.

Christopher King, Montclair State University
Jill Del Pozzo, Montclair State University

APATAP: Upcoming Conference in Hong Kong Disneyland Resort



Excitement is building for the Annual Conference of the Asia Pacific Association of Threat Assessment Professionals, to be held at Hong Kong Disneyland Resort in February 2019!

Threat assessment experts from around the world will flock to the happiest place on earth (in south-east Asia), to explore the latest trends, research, and methods in managing threats and harmful behaviours, from workplace violence to international terrorism.

With a focus on online harm

and all things cyber, highlights of the conference include a full-day FBI (Behavioral Analysis Unit) expert seminar on cyber-threats, perspectives on hostage crises and critical incidents with Peter Morgan of Clement Shield Group, and insights into social media threats from Professor Jan van Den Bulk from the University of Michigan.

For professionals working in security, policing, forensic mental health, cybersecurity and public safety, this conference provides a unique opportunity to network, collaborate, and

be part of a professional community providing best-practice services in threat assessment and management to the Asia-Pacific region.

Early bird tickets and sponsorship opportunities now available!

Luke Bartlett on behalf of the APATAP Committee Brochure

Contact: media@apatap.org

Brochure: [click here](#)

Website: www.apatap.org

New Webinar Series: Specialized Violence

Protect International is offering a new webinar series in collaboration with CONCEPT Professional Training focusing on specialized forms of violence between January and December 2019. This webinar series will focus on special issues to consider when assessing and managing risk diverse forms of violence including honour-based violence, child abuse and neglect, group-based violence, cyber violence, extremist violence, self-directed violence, elder abuse, and intersecting risks.

Some of these webinars will be free of charge and all of these webinars can be viewed live or on-demand! [Click here for more information.](#)

CONCEPT:

HCR-20-V3 Case Study Training Series Coming Soon!

In early 2019 CONCEPT Professional Training, in collaboration with Protect International Risk and Safety Services Inc., will launch a series of case studies for the HCR-20-V3. These case studies will provide professionals with the opportunity to review extensive case materials and complete the HCR-20-V3 extended worksheet, receiving feedback on gold standard ratings, case formulation, and risk management strategies for each case. Two case studies will be released for each of four sectors—forensic, corrections, higher education, and workplace—providing a unique opportunity to practice using the HCR-20 V3 on real cases and to obtain feedback about gold standard ratings from the developers of the HCR-20-V3.