



Intelligence

state of the art threat assessment

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Upcoming Events

Foundational Violence Risk Assessment and Management Workshop

Vancouver, Canada
29 April - 3 May 2019

AETAP Conference

Rotterdam, The Netherlands
6 - 9 May 2019

Self-Directed Violence Workshop

Edmonton, Canada
10 - 11 June 2019

CONCEPT Summer Training Institute

Palo Alto, United States
17 - 21 June 2019

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Editor's Note



in light of the legalization of cannabis in Canada and areas in the United States, but the answer is heavily debated. In this issue, Dr. Stephen Hart will provide a practice update about the rapidly-growing body of research regarding the association between marijuana use and violence risk, and will discuss the implications of this association for violence risk assessment and management.

In addition, we have several special announcements. First, the annual Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals conference is being held in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, between 6-9 May 2019. Second, the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators is bringing its 61st Annual Conference & Exposition to Vancouver, British Columbia, between 25-28 June 2019.

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

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 leading experts.

In this issue, Dr. Brianne Layden will provide a research update about risk for self-directed violence based on a comprehensive literature review that she conducted as part of her dissertation. She is working on the development of structured professional judgment guidelines for assessing and managing suicide risk. This is particularly relevant to threat assessment professionals in light of the intersection between interpersonal and self-directed violence.

Is there any association between marijuana use and violence risk? This is a commonly asked question

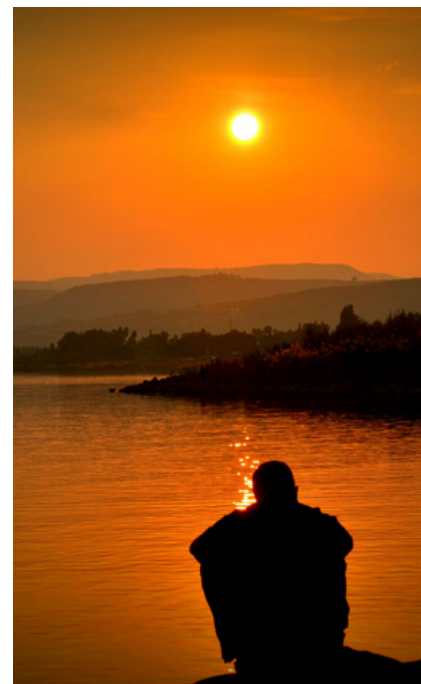
Assessing and Managing Risk for Self-Directed Violence (Suicide): Toward the Development of Structured Professional Judgment Guidelines

Over the last decade, I have become increasingly aware of the similarities in research and clinical practice regarding suicide and violence toward others. The overlap between them is substantial in terms of our professional responsibilities (duties), risk assessment and management practices, and issues with risk communication. The parallels are so strong that some authorities, including the World Health Organization (2002), consider suicide to be a form of violence and refer to it as self-directed violence.

Despite this, research and practice regarding suicide versus violence have developed separately, rather than in tandem.

The differences between practitioners in the fields of violence versus suicide are notable with respect to risk assessment and management. For example, some professionals working in the field of suicide often rely solely on unstructured judgment (i.e., intuition or instinct) or, at the other extreme, rely on quantitative or statistical tools (i.e., those that use scores to predict the likelihood of suicide). In addition, many professionals in the field of suicide utilize tools that focus on the assessment of risk, rather than procedures that facilitate the move from risk assessment to risk management. In contrast, those working in the field of violence are more likely to use methods such as structured professional judgement (SPJ) guidelines that strive for transparency, consistency, and accountability and that focus on the development of case management plans.

For my doctoral research, I conducted an extensive systematic literature review of risk factors for suicide as a first step toward the development of SPJ guidelines. The first major finding was that most of the risk factors for suicide identified in my literature review had also been identified by others as risk factors for violence. Although the existence of overlap among risk



factors for suicide and violence was not a surprise, the extent of that overlap was remarkable. The second major finding was that some risk factors for suicide identified in my literature review appeared to be unique or specific, that is, unrelated to violence. For example, transition into and out of institutional care increased the risk for suicide but has not been identified as a risk factor for violence.

The major implication of my findings is that it is both important and feasible to develop specialized SPJ guidelines for suicide risk. My hope is to help bridge the gap that currently exists between the fields of violence and suicide and, in particular, to build on the success of guidelines developed for various forms of interpersonal violence to improve the assessment and management of risk for self-directed violence.

Brianne Layden, Protect International Risk and Safety Services

Upcoming Webinars

ConCEpt and Protect International “Wednesday Webinar” Series

Specialized Violence: Group-Based Violence
27 March 2019

Specialized Violence: Cyber Violence (FREE)
17 April 2019

Specialized Violence: Extremist Violence
4 September 2019

Specialized Violence: Self-Directed Violence
2 October 2019

[Learn more...](#)

Does Cannabis Increase Violence Risk?

The *Cannabis Act* came into force on 17 October 2018, legalizing the production, distribution, sale, and possession of cannabis for recreational use throughout Canada. This makes Canada only the second country to fully legalize cannabis use, following the lead of Uruguay in 2013. In several other countries, it is lawful to cultivate or possess but not to sell cannabis. Cannabis is also fully legalized in 10 US states and the District of Columbia, as well as in several US overseas territories.

Great concern has been expressed over the potential adverse impact of increased cannabis use in Canada and other jurisdictions. A perfect example is Alex Berenson's recent book, *Tell Your Children*, in which the author concludes that cannabis causes mental illness and, in turn, serious violence among young people. If true, threat assessment professionals – and, in particular, those working in secondary education and higher education settings – should be alarmed. But what does the evidence suggest?

A review of the available research suggests there may be some association among cannabis use and mental illness in young people. Specifically, among people who develop psychotic disorders, those who use cannabis exhibit psychotic symptoms an average of 5 years earlier than those who do not. But there is no reliable evidence that people who use cannabis have a substantially increased rate of psychosis. Put simply, cannabis apparently does not cause more people to become psychotic; rather, it may cause vulnerable people develop psychosis sooner rather than later.

A review of the available research also suggests that cannabis may be associated with increased risk for violence. Specifically, people who “use” cannabis are at increased risk for perpetration of violence, as well as victimization by violence. But this appears to be linked to the dangers associated with the illegal cultivation, possession, and sale of cannabis; there is no reliable evidence of increased violence due to

the pharmacological effects of cannabis use per se (i.e., intoxication or withdrawal).

The one exception to the general findings above is that it appears a small but important number of people who are heavy users of cannabis develop psychotic symptoms such as persecutory delusions and act violently in response to them. The number of people is not sufficiently high to increase the overall rate of psychosis among cannabis users. Also, psychotic symptoms leading to violence are reported in a small number of cases among users of many drugs, legal and illegal.

In summary, there is no need for threat assessment professionals to panic. They can and should evaluate problematic cannabis use as a potential risk factor for violence in every case that comes to their attention, as they would for problematic use of any other drug, and they should pay special attention to heavy users of cannabis who develop psychotic symptoms. But there is no reason to believe that problematic cannabis use is a sure sign that violence is imminent. Alex Berenson's book has been correctly criticized as alarmist, “a polemic based on a deeply inaccurate misreading of science” according to the [Drug Policy Alliance](#). In Canada, now almost 5 months after legalization, the biggest problem with cannabis appears to be difficulty supplying enough to meet public demand. There have been no reports of significant increases in problems with criminality or mental health.

Stephen Hart, Protect International Risk and Safety Services



AETAP: Upcoming Conference in Rotterdam, The Netherlands



The 12th Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals (AETAP) conference in The Netherlands will take place between the 6th and 9th of May 2019. This conference combines a wealth of experience and the latest information from Europe, North America, Australia, Africa and Asia.

Come to network, get the latest information on threat assessment and management across the globe, and to meet world leading subject matter experts. This conference is a must-attend event for anyone

who works within security management, the prevention of targeted violence, assessment of violence risk, threat management, and anyone interested in networking across Europe.

In addition to our great speakers during the conference days, we are delighted to offer our expert seminar on the 5th of May “Dealing with social and other media in threat assessment” with Professor Jan van den Bulk from the University of Michigan, as well as a day on Core Competencies titled, “Foundations of threat

assessment and management” with Drs. Jens Hoffmann, Institute for Psychology and Threat Management; Bram Van der Meer, Dantes Psychology Services; Dr. Lorraine Sheridan, Curtin University; and Totti Karpela, Peace of Mind, Ltd.

Karoline Roshdi (Vice President AETAP) & Andrea Wechlin (President AETAP)

Website: www.aetap.eu
Program: [click here](#)
Registration: [click here](#)

Contact: info@aetap.eu

IACLEA: Vancouver is Site for Global Conference on Campus Public Safety

The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA) is thrilled to bring its 61st Annual Conference & Exposition to Vancouver, British Columbia, June 25-28, 2019. #IACLEA2019 is expected to be the largest Canadian IACLEA conference to date!

The conference is the premier educational and networking event for leaders in the higher education public safety and law enforcement profession. It draws executives from 10 countries for the four-day conference that includes a vendor exposition, four plenary sessions, and more than 30 educational workshops. The University of British Columbia Campus Safety Department will serve as host institution.

Among the many experts lined up is Bill Bratton, one of the world’s most respected experts on risk and security issues having spent 46 years in law enforcement, including as police commissioner in Los Angeles and New York City. His appearance is sponsored by LiveSafe Mobile. IACLEA also welcomes Bill Evans, executive director of public safety and chief of police for Boston College, as a plenary speaker. Chief Evans is the former police commissioner of the Boston Police Department, and lead the agency during the multi-agency search for the Boston marathon bombers.

The conference includes many social functions, allowing for networking with peers and vendors. Chief’s Night will be held at stunning Prospect Point in Stanley Park overlooking the Lion’s Gate Bridge. All attendees are invited to the welcome reception with the valued exhibitors. All conference events will take place at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver and the Hyatt Regency Vancouver.