



Intelligence

state of the art threat assessment

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Upcoming Events

Virtual 2020

Self-Care for Threat Assessment and Management Professionals

Remote Assessment and Management of Violence Risk

ASAP Workshop: Safety Assessment and Planning

Violence Prevention to Mitigate and Manage Risk

SARA Workshop: Assessing and Managing Risk for Intimate Partner Violence

Fitness for Duty and Return to Work
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Editor's Note



working in these setting and to highlight promising practices and needed improvements in this area. We believe this practice update will be relevant to professionals working in inpatient psychiatry and those working in collaboration with these settings (e.g., law enforcement, victim services, higher education).

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.

Our team greatly appreciates the holiday season will be a challenging time for everyone as COVID-19 continues, both in terms of ongoing risks and suffered losses. We know that even the smallest kind gesture means so much to everyone right now. We are grateful to everyone who has supported us this year and welcome you to reach out to us if there is any thing we can do to support you.

In this issue, Dr. Trudy Adam and I will provide a practice update related to violence risk identification, assessment, and management practices in inpatient psychiatry. We wanted to share our own experiences

We have several special announcements relevant to threat assessment professionals who wish to advance their knowledge and skills at a distance. First, CONCEPT is offering an extensive online library of professional training programs in 2021. Second, Protect International is pleased to announce that they are offering more than 25 live virtual workshops on special topics throughout in 2021.

On behalf of our entire team, happy holidays and warm wishes! Thank you so much for your commitment to preventing violence and increasing safety during these challenging times.

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

Violence Risk Identification, Assessment, and Management Practices in Inpatient Psychiatry: Promising Practices and Needed Improvements

There has been a great deal of attention in research and practice related to violence perpetrated by patients with serious mental illness. Recently, several hospitals in Canada have faced significant fines and strong reprimands for not taking reasonable steps to protect the safety of their workers. For instance, in 2019 the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital in Coquitlam, British Columbia, was fined almost \$650,000 for failing to maintain a safe workplace after two nurses were

seriously assaulted by patients. This was the largest fine ever levied by WorkSafe BC in its history. In addition, following a guilty plea, Southlake Regional Health Centre was fined \$80,000 in the provincial offences court in Newmarket, Ontario for failing to take reasonable steps to maintain the safety of staff after two nurses suffered injuries due to an assault by a patient.

Although the majority of individuals with serious mental illness do not commit violence, serious mental illness is a major risk factor for violence. [Research](#) suggests that many committed psychiatric inpatients have perpetrated violence before, during, and after hospitalization and that individuals with serious mental illness are at approximately double the risk of being violent in comparison to individuals without serious mental illness. Violence perpetrated by individuals with serious mental illness has major implications for the victim, perpetrator, and community. Victims of violence often suffer from physical injury and psychological trauma that may extend over long periods of time. Perpetrators of violence with serious mental illness may face increased stigma and barriers to services. Furthermore, violence perpetrated by individuals with serious mental illness results in a financial burden to criminal justice, social service, and health systems.

Combined, we have years of experience working in inpatient psychiatric settings

in Canada and we wanted to take this opportunity to share our thoughts about promising practices and needed improvements related to violence risk identification, assessment and management practices in these settings. For instance, I (Dr. Kelly Watt) worked in an emergency psychiatry unit for several years in British Columbia, first as a psychology intern and then as a psychology fellow. As a psychology fellow, part of my job was to conduct comprehensive violence risk assessments of patients admitted to this unit which was the first time this had ever been done on any inpatient psychiatry unit in this health region. I also had the opportunity to conduct a study of the nature and prevalence of violence on this unit while I was a psychology fellow, and a study of the violence risk identification, assessment, and management practices of 13 inpatient psychiatry units in this health region.

Some important observations I made while conducting comprehensive risk assessments is that many staff informed me that they felt safer now that these assessments were being done, and that some of the patients were receiving better care than they had previously (e.g., longer stays, increased observation, more planning). I also learned about several promising practices other units were engaging in related to violence risk identification (e.g., formal screening, routine monitoring, safety huddles),

Upcoming Webinars

CONCEPT and Protect International “Wednesday Webinar” Series

The Importance of Risk Communication: Oral Reports and Feedback Sessions
20 January 2021

The Importance of Risk Communication: Short Reports
17 February 2021

The Importance of Risk Communication: Long Reports
17 March 2021

[Learn more ...](#)

Violence Risk Identification, Assessment, and Management Practices in Inpatient Psychiatry: Promising Practices and Needed Improvements

management (e.g., using diverse strategies to manage short-term risk), and violence risk communication (e.g., using multiple modes to communicate). However, there were also needed improvements related to 1) using formal instruments for identifying and assessing violence risk in inpatient psychiatric settings, 2) considering long-term risk management strategies that could be implemented both in the hospital and in the community, 3) broadening risk communication to all those who need to know (e.g., family, police), and 4) learning how to more effectively communicate and document concerns about violence risk.



In addition, I (Dr. Trudy Adam) have worked in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in British Columbia for almost ten years. Over this time, I have been treating severe and persistent adolescent mental illness in emergency, inpatient, and forensic settings. In each of these contexts, I have observed a strong focus on the risk for self-directed violence (including suicide), which is understandable, as it is often a feature of the youth's mental

health presentation. However, relatively little emphasis is placed on the identification, assessment and management of other-directed violence, even though it is also a common feature of moderate to severe mental illness in youth. Indeed, other-directed violence is relatively common in the inpatient context, and contribute to significant staff injuries and lost work hours for youth inpatient units across the Province. Still, it is not commonplace for psychiatric caregivers to assess violence formally outside of the youth forensic setting.

In the inpatient mental health context, we have piloted a

team-based risk triage process for the identification of multiple risks, including other-directed violence. This is the first effort in the Province to formally identify and manage risk for other-directed violence in the youth inpatient setting. The triage process entails the collaboration of multiple team members (including youth and family) in identifying risks and implement immediate actions to mitigate risks. Through this work, we have observed a decrease in

the incidence of other-directed violence over all inpatient settings at our test facility. This is likely due to the fact that staff are more confident in identifying risks and implementing plans, and staff are doing a better job communicating about risk through daily safety huddles and clear chart documentation. In addition, youth and family have also reported that they feel more involved in their inpatient care, more supported by staff in reporting and managing risk, and greatly appreciate the collaborative approach to developing both pragmatic and effective immediate actions.

Across both of our experiences, while inpatient psychiatry has taken great strides to identify and manage risk for violence, we are aware that we are (or we were) the only site in our province putting this amount of effort into working on such a priority. Further, concerns regarding assaults and threats to mental health staff are only increasing within British Columbia, across Canada, and around the world. With increasing recognition that incidents of violence towards staff are partly attributable to lapses or challenges in risk identification, assessment and management, the standardization of these processes will be essential in addressing safety lapses and avoiding related fines.

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Course Offerings by CONCEPT, Palo Alto University's Division of Continuing & Professional Studies



[CONCEPT](#), Palo Alto University's Division of Continuing & Professional Studies, delivers advanced training for mental health and allied professionals, providing meaningful knowledge and skills required for practice in specialized domains. We offer an [extensive library of professional training programs relevant for threat assessment professionals](#), developed and delivered by Protect International and many other experts in this field, including foundational training on risk assessment tools; advanced training on case formulation and risk management planning; and short, focused programs on critical topics and issues.

Our training programs are ideal for developing skills, following best practices, and improving credibility, all of which provide a critical competitive advantage in the field and on the job market. Our programs are accessible and individualized to fit even the busiest of schedules, with a mix of self-paced and live courses, so you can take your practice to the next level.

This New Year, make a resolution to advance your career by earning CE credits or participating in a workshop. Some of our exciting new content includes new [Police & Public Safety courses](#), as well as the launch of the newest versions of the [RSVP](#) (for sexual violence), the [MLG](#) (for group-based violence), and the [PATRIARCH](#) (for honor-based violence), all critical tools for assessing and managing diverse forms of violence risk.



**PROTECT INTERNATIONAL
RISK AND SAFETY SERVICES**

Upcoming Virtual Workshops 2021

[Protect International](#) is pleased to announce that we are offering more than [25 virtual workshops](#) in 2021 which you can attend via Zoom! We are committed to providing many options for on-line workshops to respect ongoing COVID-19 social distancing and travel guidelines. You informed us you needed special topics and wanted diverse times, so we are providing a wide range of topics related to assessing and managing violence risk and delivering them during times that will be accessible to diverse professionals around the world. Our virtual workshops will include standard workshops we routinely offer (e.g., [Foundational](#) and [Advanced](#) Violence Risk Assessment and Management Workshops), new workshops that have never been offered by us before (e.g., regarding self-care, remote assessment, conduct investigations, fitness for duty, return to work), skills mastery workshops (e.g., focusing on case formulation and scenario planning), and the launch of the newest versions of three structured professional judgment tools (e.g., the [PATRIARCH](#), [MLG](#), and [RSVP](#)) in collaboration with CONCEPT!