



Intelligence

state of the art threat assessment

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Upcoming Events

AETAP Conference

How to Conduct Workplace Investigations Involving Mental Health Problems (Fitness for Work, Return to Work, Reasonable Accommodation)

Understanding... Violence Risk Communication Workshop Series

IAFMHS Conference

Using the PCL-R and PCL:SV to Assess Psychopathic Personality Disorder: Fundamental Workshop

[Learn more..](#)

Editor's Note



wars.

I am also providing a practice update related to violence risk communication by sharing a few stories with you based on real cases to help illustrate the importance of risk communication and with the hope of promoting improvements in practice.

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 hopes this newsletter finds you, your family, your friends, and your colleagues well. Many of us around the world are continuing to struggle with COVID-19 and it is just heart breaking to see all the devastating events around the world on top of this.

In this issue, Dr. Randy Kropp will provide an important research update related to the SARA-V3 for assessing and managing risk of intimate partner violence. This is a very timely research update in light of the international increase in the prevalence and severity of intimate partner violence related to the pandemic, disasters, and

In addition, we have several special announcements related to new tools and upcoming conferences. First, we are launching final versions the Violence Risk Triage and Self-Directed Violence Risk Triage later this year! Second, we want to draw your attention to two upcoming conferences in the spring hosted by the Assosiation of European Threat Assessment Proffesionals (AETAP) and the International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services (IAFMHS)!

On behalf of our entire team, thank you 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

The Importance of Risk Communication

Risk communication is one of the most challenging tasks when conducting violence risk assessments for, but also the most important task to ensure that management recommendations are implemented. Risk communication may occur in many different forms including oral reports, written reports, feedback sessions, and expert testimony. Risk communication may also occur at many different times during assessment and management, including before, during or after an assessment is complete depending on the case and concerns about imminent or serious violence. Attention has been turned to the importance of this issue by leaders in this field for over two decades (e.g., Elbogen, 2002; Heilbrun, Dvoskin, Hart, & McNiel, 1999; Hilton, Carter, Harris, & Sharpe, 2008; Hilton, Harris, Rawson, & Beach, 2005; Storey, Watt, & Hart, 2015). Nevertheless, I strongly believe risk communication is often overlooked and, as a result, violence is not prevented in practice. I wanted to share a few stories with you based on real cases our team was involved with to help illustrate the importance of risk communication and to hopefully promote improvements in practice.

One time, when we were doing a violence risk assessment, we became very concerned about the risk of imminent and lethal violence by a husband to his wife and the possible abduction of their son. He had engaged in chronic, serious, and escalating physical violence towards her, they had recently separated and were sharing custody of their son, and he had started to threaten and stalk her. We contacted all the service

providers involved in managing the case to provide them with an oral report. One service provider did not call us back to hear the oral report and encouraged the victim to return to her family home. Soon after returning home, her husband broke into their family home, attempted to murder her, and abducted their child.



One of biggest lessons we learned from this case related to risk communication is how important it is to share an oral report with every relevant service provider involved in managing the case. In this case, it only took one service provider not receiving the oral report that led to actions that resulted in an assault of the victim, abduction of their child, and could have resulted in an intimate partner homicide.

Another time, we were doing a violence risk assessment because a student engaged in threatening statements (e.g., talking about the value of murderers) and intimidating behaviour (e.g., raising his voice and pushing over tables and chairs) towards staff and students

at a university and engaged in family violence towards his parents at home. During the assessment, we learned that he was also experiencing recent health problems and adjustment problems. Due to concerns about imminent and serious violence we wrote a short report that we shared with police. This short report led police to bring the student to hospital under the mental health act, led the hospital to assess and treat the student, led the community to provide the student with outpatient care, which all led to improvement in his mental health and desistence of violence. This story shows why short reports are so important for implementing management strategies and for preventing future violence.

One of most important things we learned from this case related to risk communication is how important it is to share a short report with those relevant service providers involved in managing the case. In this case, the short report provided service providers with the information they needed to implement immediate actions which not only helped the student to access needed services but also helped to prevent further violence to his family, staff, students, the campus community.

I hope hearing about these stories helps to illustrate the importance of risk communication, and encourages you to think about and to share your own experiences in this area. By doing so, together we can continue to promote improvements in practice.

Kelly A. Watt, PhD
Protect International Risk and Safety Services

Intelligence, Volume 8, Issue 1, 2022

New Research on the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide – Version 3

The publication of the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide – Version 3 (SARA-V3) in 2015 introduced several advancements in the process of intimate partner violence (IPV) risk assessment, including the reorganization of earlier versions of the SARA to include analyses of risk factor relevance, case formulation, scenario planning, and risk management recommendations. Two recent independent publications offer further support for the reliability and validity for these guidelines in law enforcement, corrections, and treatment settings.

In the first study, [Hilton et al. \(2021\)](#) examined the reliability of risk scores and risk factors from several IPV risk assessment tools utilized in a law enforcement setting, including the SARA-V3, SARA-V2, Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk (B-SAFER), and the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA). One of the study's goals was to determine if these risk tools could be coded reliably from information readily available from police case threat assessment files, without necessarily having the benefit of interviews with perpetrators and victims. The results were encouraging for all of the measures. Generally, total risk assessment scores were higher than those reported previously in police settings, suggesting that the referrals for specialized risk assessment were generally justified. Further, interrater reliability (IRR) coefficients for total scores and most subscales generally exceeded .70, suggesting that risk information was

generally available and could be reliably coded from files. IRRs for individual risk factors were generally consistent with previous research. With respect to the SARA-V3, the strongest IRRs were found for the Nature of IPV and Perpetrator Factors, with moderate IRRs for the Victim Vulnerability factors. The poorer reliabilities for the victim factors (and for certain mental health factors pertaining to the perpetrator) suggest that this information is more difficult to obtain and document in the law enforcement context.

In the second study, [Schafers, Olver, and Wormith \(2021\)](#) examined the use of the SARA-V3 and ODARA in an IPV correctional outpatient treatment setting and examined the psychometric properties and predictive validity of the tools on 88 perpetrators who attended the program. The ODARA was rated at pretreatment using participant files, and the Nature of IPV and Perpetrator SARA-V3 factors (Victim Vulnerability factors were not available) were coded at pre- and posttreatment using facilitator ratings, collateral file information, and participant questionnaires. General criminal and violence recidivism data were obtained from a court database, and the average post-treatment follow-up period was 15 months. The SARA-V3 domains and ODARA demonstrated strong convergent validity pretreatment, a result consistent with previous literature, but the association between the SARA-V3 perpetrator factors and the ODARA was less strong after treatment, “possibly owing to the

dynamic nature of this domain relative to the static nature of the ODARA.” Both tools predicted general and violent recidivism with moderate to high accuracy. Regression analyses indicated that SARA-V3 posttreatment ratings added incremental validity to the ODARA in the prediction of recidivism, but a “vice versa” effect was not found. Further, innovative analyses indicated that those who did not complete the treatment program were found to be of higher risk and had higher recidivism rates, and changes on the SARA-V3's Perpetrator Risk Factors domain were significantly associated with decreased recidivism. In other words, improvement on SARA-V3 Perpetrator factors were related to better outcome. The findings provide support for the dynamic nature of risk and suggests that directly targeting relevant SARA-V3 factors can reduce risk and recidivism.

For threat assessment professionals around the world and our efforts to prevent intimate partner violence, these two studies reinforce the importance of considering research when making decisions about which guideline we will use to structure our decision making to 1) increase our ability to make reliable judgements about risk factors, 2) help us to make accurate judgements about risk scenarios, and 3) to assist us with evaluating any benefits from intervention.

*P. Randall Kropp, PhD
Protect International Risk and Safety Services*



Upcoming AETAP Conference

The Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals is excited to host their 13th annual conference as an online event this year, between 25th and 28th April 2022. Attendees will have the option to attend 13 presentations over the 4 days. After Monday's welcome session, the conference will be kicked off by keynote speakers Dr. Stephen White and Dr. Philip Saragoza with their presentation 'Extremism and violence risk in organizational settings. Each morning between 8:45 am and 1:00 pm (CEST) attendees get a chance to attend any presentation they like and also receive access to the recordings for four weeks after the event.

For detailed information see our [website](#). Alternatively, register your interest [here](#).



Upcoming IAFMHS Conference

The 2022 International Association of Forensic Mental Health (IAFMHS) Annual conference will be held in-person on 14-16 June 2022 at H4 Hotel Berlin-Alexanderplatz, Berlin, Germany. The theme for the conference is "Innovations and Resilience through Adversity: Advances in Forensic Mental Health Assessment and Treatment", and will cover topics such as:

- Risk assessment and management
- Domestic and intimate partner violence
- Forensic assessment instrument training
- Resilience and protective factors

A number of excellent pre-conference workshops will also be offered on 13 June 2022, including one by Dr. Brianne Layden on Assessing and Managing Multiple Risks in Violence Risk Assessment. More information about the conference and registration can be found [here](#).



Launch of the Official Versions of the VRT and SDVRT

Protect International is launching the official versions of the [Violence Risk Triage \(VRT\)](#) and the [Self-Directed Violence Risk Triage \(SDVRT\)](#) in 2022. These tools have been developed to help professionals to determine when they have reason to be concerned about violence towards others or self, how to prioritize cases, and what immediate actions to implement. The VRT and SDVRT have been under development for more than a decade and are based on extensive research, consideration of law, feedback from experts, and consultation with professionals around the world!

The live virtual VRT Workshop will be taking place on 12 October 2022 and the live virtual SDVRT Workshop will be taking place on 16 November 2022!