

Interventions for the prevention and management of occupational stress injury in first responders: a rapid overview of reviews

Summary

First responders are at high-risk for occupational stress injuries (OSI), as they often encounter prolonged stress within their line of work, resulting in high-cost personal and systemic implications. This rapid overview of reviews summarized existing evidence on interventions for the prevention and rehabilitation of OSI in first responders. The results suggest potentially effective interventions exist for police, firefighters, and correctional officers.

Implications

The findings will serve as a basis for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) to develop an evidence-based strategy to tackle OSI in frontline personnel. Although some promising interventions were identified, several gaps were also identified that will require further investigation prior to widespread implementation of effective interventions.

Reference: [Antony J, Brar R, Khan PA, et al. Interventions for the prevention and management of occupational stress injury in first responders: a rapid overview of reviews. Syst Rev. 2020;9\(1\):121. doi:10.1186/s13643-020-01367-w](#)

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What is the objective?

- To conduct an overview of reviews summarizing the usefulness of existing strategies for the prevention and management of occupational stress injury (OSI) targeting frontline public/community safety personnel

How was the review conducted?

- MEDLINE, EMBASE, PsycINFO, CINAHL, Web of Science, and Cochrane Library databases were searched in February 2019 for relevant reviews
- The search was limited to include English-language reviews published in the past 10 years (i.e. 2009-2019)
- Reviewers independently screened titles and abstracts and full-text articles in pairs. A pilot was conducted prior to both levels of screening. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion or by a third reviewer
- Data was abstracted by one reviewer and verified by another. A pilot was conducted prior to full abstraction. Discrepancies were resolved by a third reviewer
- Results were summarized narratively due to the variance of study design and outcomes

What did the review find?

- Within the 14 included reviews, we identified 47 unique primary studies, examining both a relevant first responder population and an intervention targeting OSI. Majority of the studies focused on police (78.7%) and firefighters (17%) with only a small percentage focusing on correctional officers (COs) (4.3%). The 47 primary studies were comprised of RCTs (41.7%), followed by observational (16.7%), quasi-experimental (14.6%), NRCT (12.5%), case reports (12.5%) and a descriptive study (2.1%)
- Twenty-four primary studies included prevention strategies for police (n=21), firefighters (n=2), and COs (n=1), including suicide prevention (n=4), resilience training (n=4), stress management (n=7), and other health promotion strategies (n=9). There were promising results for police officers, specifically with the use of resilience training programs and other health promotion strategies involving a combination of physical, mental, and emotional education. Suicide prevention and stress management interventions had mixed results across the groups.
- Twenty-three of the unique primary studies focused on rehabilitation intervention strategies for police (n=16), firefighters (n=6), and COs (n=1), including psychotherapy (n=16), drug therapy (n=2), and other therapies (n=5). Some debriefing studies showed significant reductions in OSI symptoms, but most therapies had varied results.
- The majority of studies failed to report statistical significance, highlighting the need for more robust studies to serve those impacted by OSI