

Patient and Paramedic Perceptions on Care Received during Mental Health Crises

Paramedic Mini CAT – Fanshawe College

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Background

Mental health impacts everyone in varying ways, playing a large role in our quality of life. The importance of recognizing mental health issues and promoting individuals struggling to receive help has become more prevalent over the past few years. In 2019, The Canadian Mental Health Association reported approximately 1 in 5 Canadians will personally experience a mental health problem or illness. As paramedics, it is important to understand what our patients experiencing mental health crises are going through, treating them in a similar manner as those who present with physical ailments. Unfortunately, many stereotypes and stigmas surrounding mental health are still present and can impact the quality of care, support and compassion individuals experiencing mental health crises receive. We need to push against these stigmas, finding better approaches to provide the best care possible for our patients, regardless of the reason they have called for our help. We are advocates for our patients, and we need to show up for every patient equally.

Review question

How do individuals experiencing mental health crises perceive paramedics and the care they provide, compared to the perceptions made by paramedics themselves, impact a patient's overall quality of care?

Search strategy (Basic): Paramedics or paramedic or emergency medical service or EMT or ambulance, perceptions or attitudes or opinion or experience or view or reflection or beliefs, mental health or mental illness or mental disorder or psychiatric illness.

Limits: Published between 2015 – 2021, Full text available.

Databases searched: MEDLINE and CINAHL Plus.

Search results: MEDLINE = 1,020 results; CINAHL Plus = 204. 1,224 articles in total were produced using the search strategy above.

Included for review: 10 articles were included for review based on their relevance to the review question. Out of the 10 articles included for review, 3 articles were selected as they provided the best insight into patient and paramedic perceptions regarding the care provided for patients experiencing mental health crises.

| Title, author, year | Study design | Population | Outcomes | Results | Weaknesses & Strengths |
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| <p>“I was worried if I don’t have a broken leg they might not take it seriously”: Experiences of men accessing ambulance services for mental health and/or alcohol and other drug problems, Ferguson et al., 2019.</p> | <p>Exploratory qualitative approach involving semi-structured interviews. Interviews were analyzed using The Framework approach to thematic analysis.</p> | <p>30 Australian men aged 18 and older who have utilized ambulance services for mental health and/or alcohol and other drug problems in the past 12 months.</p> | <p>Increased training and organizational measures should be taken to enhance paramedics’ communication when providing care to men with mental health and/or alcohol or other drug problems.</p> | <p>3 main themes arose from participants experiences of care: professionalism and compassion, communication, and hand over. Positive experiences involved paramedics demonstrating effective communication skills, compassion and empathy. Negative experiences involved perceived lack of professionalism, poor communication skills and poor handover of care to emergency department staff.</p> | <p>Discussion of findings may be applicable more broadly.</p> <p>Participants self-elected to participate in the study which may affect results.</p> <p>A K10 (distress screening) was used, excluding individuals who were experiencing high levels of distress from participating. Interviews only captured participants who were classified at the less severe end of depression and anxiety scales.</p> <p>Grouping mental health with alcohol and other drug problems may have obscured the unique experiences of patients with particular issues.</p> <p>Sample only included two patients who use methamphetamines.</p> |
| <p>An inevitable response? A lived experienced perspective on emergency responses to mental health crises, White, C. J., 2019.</p> | <p>Narrative discussion conducted by author.</p> | <p>The author, who experienced mental health emergency/ crises.</p> | <p>Author gave personal anecdotal information regarding the disconnect within emergency care for</p> | <p>No results were given as no interventions were studied. However, the article provides insight into how the different emergency care pathways</p> | <p>Highly anecdotal and personal to the patient, information is not generalizable to all persons experiencing mental health crises.</p> <p>Provides insight into different pathways in both prehospital and</p> |

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| | | | <p>mental health patients, as well as the disadvantages of the existing emergency care response for these patients. Author provided suggestions for alternative pathways to better help patients experiencing mental health crises.</p> | <p>effected personal outcomes in care received and well-being.</p> | <p>hospital care and the impact of these areas on care patient received.</p> |
| <p>Paramedics' perceptions of their scope of practice in caring for patients with non-medical emergency-related mental health and/or alcohol and other drug problems: A qualitative study, McCann, T.V. et al., 2018.</p> | <p>Qualitative study, recruitment through online survey and participated in qualitative phone interviews. Mixed methodology study using qualitative interviews and online surveys. A Framework Method of analysis was used to analyze the</p> | <p>Sample of 73 Australian paramedics.</p> | <p>Paramedics require more education in providing care to patients with mental health and/or alcohol or other drug problems.</p> <p>Community paramedicine with a focus on supporting those in the community with mental</p> | <p>Three themes and subthemes arose from data: caring for these patients is a routine part of paramedics' work, contracting perspectives about scope of practice in caring for this group of patients, competing perspective about extending scope of practice to incorporate education with</p> | <p>Discussion highlights and themes are applicable to Australian paramedics who did not participate in the study as well as other developed countries.</p> <p>A limitation is combining mental health with alcohol and of drug problems as is takes away from the unique experiences with particular issues.</p> |

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| | qualitative data. | | <p>health and/or alcohol and other drug problems can be an alternative solution to help provide better patient care.</p> <p>Extending paramedics role in providing care to these individuals could be beneficial in improving quality of care, reducing need for transportation to emergency departments and decreasing workloads in emergency departments.</p> | this cohort of patients. | |
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Comments:

There was great difficulty finding articles looking at both patient perceptions of care received from paramedics and paramedics perceptions of patients experiencing mental health crises as there is currently limited research on this topic.

Considerations:

Limitations for the articles include small populations that may cause a lack of generalizability. Research conducted outside of North America may also cause lack of generalizability as services

and experiences may differ. Articles included perceptions of patients and paramedics, which is subjective. Overall, there is a lack of research within this area.

Future research should look to include larger population samples, including people who experienced high distress due to mental health crises, their input is valuable and can give greater insight into the area's paramedics can improve their interpersonal skills and care. The more individuals that can give their perspective, the more beneficial it can be for paramedic services and their abilities to provide better care in mental health emergencies. More research is required in this area to help gain a better understanding of what can be done for paramedics to improve their approach and care for mental health related calls. Future research should also focus on how paramedic perceptions of these patients impact the level of care they provide and why.

Clinical bottom line:

The perceptions paramedics hold regarding individuals experiencing mental health crises impacts the provided level of care to these patients. The individuals experiencing mental health crises perception of the level of care provided by paramedics demonstrates great insight into how better care can be achieved and provided, supporting the need for future research in this area.

References

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