

DAILY MENTAL HEALTH MONITORING AMONG RCMP CADETS

www.rcmpstudy.ca

Self-monitoring and mental health

Self-monitoring of mental health symptoms through the tracking of one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours is an integral aspect of many therapeutic models, and can help lessen the severity of mental health disorder symptoms. The current study examined the practice of daily self-monitoring among Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) cadets in order to determine whether daily mental health monitoring was likewise associated with improvements in self-reported mental health symptoms.

The therapeutic benefits of self-monitoring



Increased emotional awareness, knowledge of mood patterns, and self-management of symptoms

Mental health challenges among RCMP

Like all public safety personnel, RCMP are frequently exposed to potentially psychologically traumatic events. The frequent exposures and other occupational stressors can contribute to Posttraumatic Stress Injuries (PTSI) and other mental health challenges. A high number (approximately 50%) of RCMP screen positive for one or more mental health disorders.

The study

As part of a Federal Framework on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, the current research draws on data from a larger, 10-year RCMP Study designed to assess the impact of skills taught to help protect members from PTSI.

In this study, RCMP cadets in the 26-week Cadet Training Program (CTP), completed daily self-report questionnaires, and undertook assessment for symptoms of various mental health disorders. Demographic characteristics such as sex, marital status, and education were also examined. In total, 394 cadets participated in the study and completed a total of 15,400 daily surveys.

The RCMP Study is funded by support from the RCMP, the Government of Canada, and the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. R. N. Carleton is supported by the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Arts at The University of Regina, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canada Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and a Medavie Foundation Project Grant. L. Lix is supported by a Tier I Canada Research Chair in Methods for Electronic Health Data Quality. T. O. Afifi is supported by a Tier I Canada Research Chair in Childhood Adversity and Resilience. The development, analyses, and distribution of the current article was made possible by a generous and much-appreciated grant from the Medavie Foundation. The original wording of the study was changed and condensed for the current research infographic.

Self-reporting measures completed by cadets

Daily surveys	Assessing: mood, attitude, performance, physical wellness, emotional state, hours worked, hours slept, quality of sleep, eating patterns, social activity, physical activity, substance use
Surveys at start/end of training	Assessing symptoms of: Alcohol Use Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Results

The data demonstrated an inverse relationship between self-reported mental health symptoms and the number of daily surveys completed by cadets; specifically, by the end of training cadets who completed more daily surveys reported decreased mental health symptom scores for Alcohol Use Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Panic Disorder, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

Among cadets reporting mental health symptoms at the start of training



Daily survey use was associated with decreased severity of mental health disorder symptoms by the end of training

Conclusions

Current results indicate that daily mental health monitoring over the course of training is associated with improvements in the severity of mental health symptoms reported by cadets. This may support including self-monitoring in the Cadet Training Program as a potentially protective measure against the impacts of PPTE. By extension, daily monitoring of mental health disorder symptoms among serving RCMP could likewise have the potential to help mitigate the severity of mental health disorder symptoms, and should therefore be considered among targeted mental health supports for members.

The current results assist in advancing Canada's first-ever National Action Plan on Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries, including additional investment to support the health and well-being of first responders and other public safety personnel.



[Read the full study here](#)

Shields, R. E., Teckchandani, T. A., Asmundson, G. J. G., Nisbet, J., Krakauer, R., Andrews, K. L., Maguire, K. Q., Jamshidi, L., Afifi, T. O., Lix, L. M., Brunet, A., Sauer-Zavala, S., Krätzig, G. P., Neary, J. P., Sareen, J., & Carleton, R. N. (2023). Daily survey participation and positive changes in mental health symptoms scores among Royal Canadian Mounted Police cadets. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1145194. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1145194>

Special thanks to Kara Vincent for excellent support in creating this infographic.



University of Regina