# Patient Safety in Mental Health: A Systematic Review of the Literature

**Tracey A. Brickell**, Tonia L. Nicholls, Ric M. Procyshyn, Rebecca J. Dempster, Jennifer A. A. Laviole, Kimberly J. Sahlstrom, Todd M. Tomita, & Eugene Wang

1 British Columbia Mental Health and Addiction Services; 2 University of British Columbia

## INTRODUCTION

It is only recently that patient safety in mental health was considered a field in its own right. There is a lack of awareness of the issues as well as a shortage of research and readily available information to guide patient safety systems, practices, policies, and care delivery in mental health.

A comprehensive review of the white and grey literature was conducted to identify current trends and gaps in the patient safety and mental health literature. This research is part of a larger project which includes an analysis of data from (a) key informant interviews and (b) discussions at an invitational roundtable event, conducted to produce a background paper on patient safety in mental health.

## SEARCH METHOD (continued)

A literature search on infection prevention and control, and fire prevention and precautions, did not reveal results unique or relevant to mental health and were not included in the search strategy.

The searches were directed by the CPSI and BCMHAS librarians in collaboration with the research team. The white literature searches were completed in Medline, CINAHL, Embase, and PsycINFO electronic databases. 974 documents were retrieved for review.

The grey literature was searched using 66 Canadian and international patient safety, mental health, government health care, and library websites. Seven key search terms were entered into the main search box one at a time. If a key term returned greater than 20 hits, it was combined with 32 keywords, one at a time. The publication or research link were searched when no search box was available. 403 documents were retrieved.

Approximately 110 papers were reviewer nominated and/or identified from reference lists during the review.

## RESULTS (continued)

**Under-researched Populations and Settings**

The majority of the research was conducted on adult populations and in hospital settings. Little research was found on older adults and child/adolescents; different cultural, ethnic, and religious groups; indigenous populations; or patients from the private sector, rural settings, and other community-based mental health care.

**Emotional and Psychological Experiences**

Lacking from the literature was research investigating the emotional or psychological experiences following a patient safety incident, with most research focusing on physical harm and injuries.

**Risk Assessment, Training, and Intervention**

Research focused on establishing well-validated and consistently accepted risk assessment tools, with sound psychometric properties. Greater attention is required to under-researched populations and areas including older adults and child/adolescent populations; different cultural, ethnic, and religious groups; indigenous populations; and patients from the private sector, rural settings, and other community-based mental health care services. Research investigating the perspectives of the patient and their social network on patient safety incidents, along with the perspective of the staff, would be valuable. Research looking at the physical, as well as the emotional, and psychological outcomes associated with patient safety events is required.

## CONCLUSION

Research on patient safety in Canadian mental health care is particularly lacking. To attract high quality researchers who can develop and implement rigorous methodologies and generate Canadian data, research funds need to be available.

Greater attention is required to under-researched populations and areas including older adults and child/adolescent populations; different cultural, ethnic, and religious groups; indigenous populations; and patients from the private sector, rural settings, and other community-based mental health care services. Research investigating the perspectives of the patient and their social network on patient safety incidents, along with the perspective of the staff, would be valuable. Research looking at the physical, as well as the emotional, and psychological outcomes associated with patient safety events is required.

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