




Violence Against Paramedics In Canada

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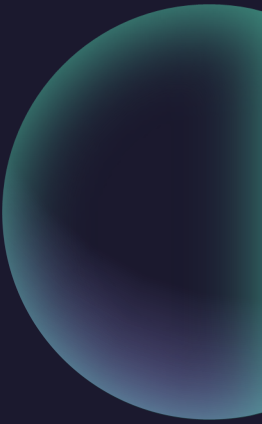
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 - Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU)



When is it ok to
assault a
paramedic?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZXL35r0EOE>





Violence



Violence

“...the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”

International Labour Office, International Council of Nurses,
World Health Organization, & Public Services International, 2002



Violence

Bullying	a person's perception of repeated negative acts such as harassment, intimidation, exclusion, isolation, hostility, character assignation and constant criticism
Verbal Abuse	a person's perception of being professionally and personally attacked, devalued or humiliated via the spoken word
Threat	a person's perception of an intention to inflict personal pain, harm, damage, disadvantage, or psychological harm
Physical Abuse	a person's perception of an unwelcome or uninvited action that involves physical contact with a person with the intent of causing physiological, emotional and bodily harm
Sexual Harassment	a person's perception of sexual propositioning or unwelcome sexual attention; can include behaviours such as humiliating, offensive jokes, stories, remarks or voyeurism with sexual overtones, suggestive looks or physical gestures, exposed genitalia, gifts of a sexual connotation or requests for inappropriate physical examinations, pressure for dates
Sexual Abuse	a person's perception of an unwelcome or uninvited action that involves physical contact of a sexual nature

Workplace violence

“...workplace violence may include, but is not limited to, verbal threats, leaving threatening notes or sending threatening notes or emails in the workplace, sexual violence, throwing of objects”.

Ontario Ministry of Labour Occupational Health & Safety Act

“...violent acts (including physical assaults and threats of assaults) directed towards persons at work or on duty”.

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)



Scope of the challenge



Violence against paramedics

- systematic review of the peer-reviewed literature in 2020
 - only 34 studies worldwide have examined some facet of violence (e.g., predictors of violence, incidence and prevalence, consequences of exposure to violence) against paramedics
 - 2 Canadian studies
 - n = 1,977
 - 0.05% of all paramedics in Canada
- the rate of assaults against paramedics has tripled between 2001-2014
- increasing evidence indicating gender disparity wherein female paramedic / Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel have a disproportionally greater risk of violence related injuries





Violence against paramedics



THREATS
55-83%

PHYSICAL ABUSE
26-44%

VERBAL ABUSE
67-82%

MULTIPLE FORMS
OF VIOLENCE
74%

INTIMIDATION
41-53%

SEXUAL
HARASSMENT
14-17%

SEXUAL ASSAULT
3-4%

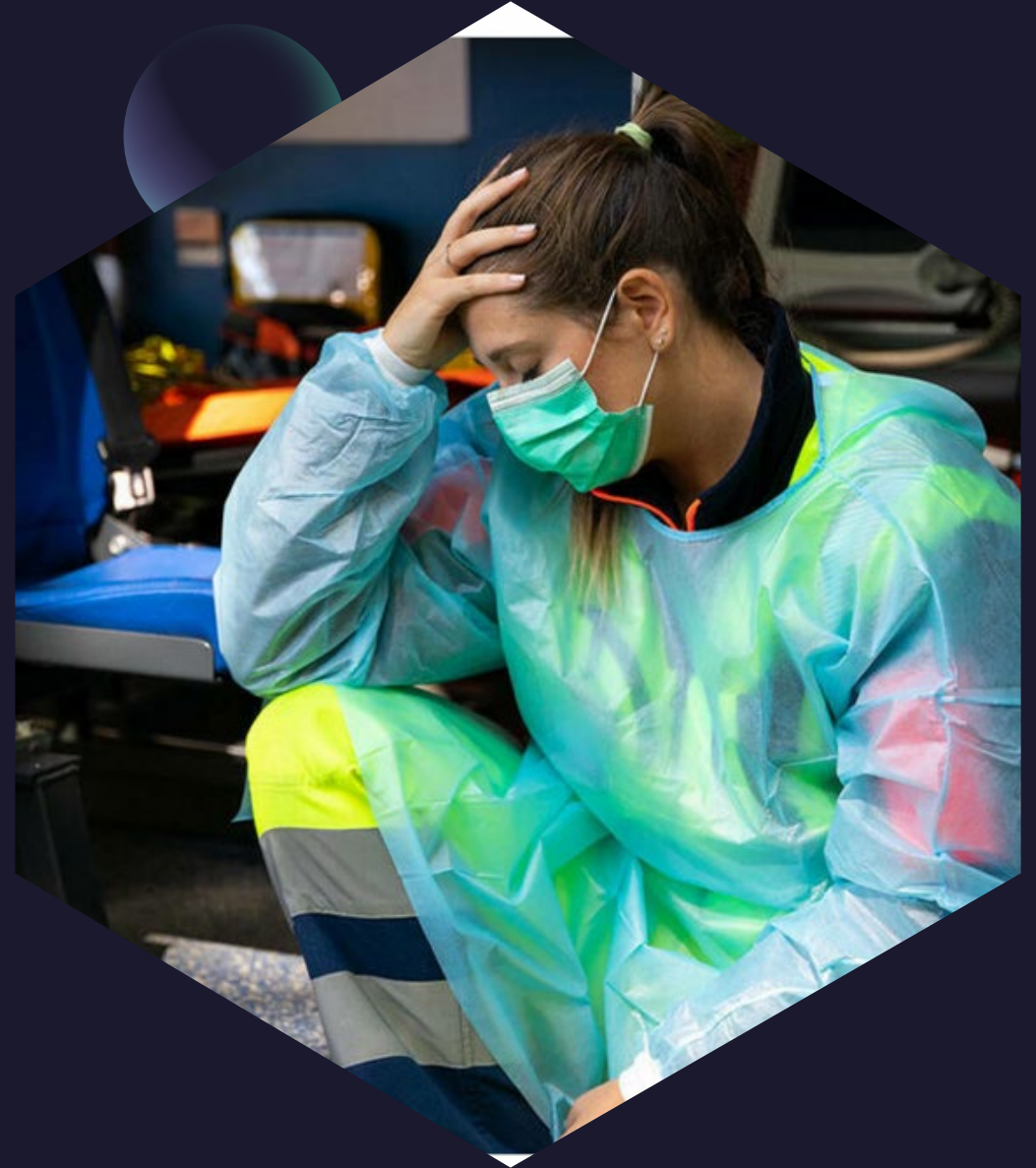
57% of women feeling
unsafe on the job

female paramedics
report being victims
of violence at a
greater rate than male
paramedics

approximately 2,000 Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
personnel in the US are injured every year
in a violence related incidence

Paramedics in Canada

Making headlines...for all the wrong
reasons



Guelph woman accused of assaulting paramedics

Patient arrested after attacking 3 paramedics at hospital, police say

Sarnia man 'terribly embarrassed' for cursing at police, paramedics after impaired crash

Rocks hurled at Ottawa ambulance at downtown truck convoy

'It's not normal': Violence against paramedics in Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon a big problem

Man arrested after knife brandished at Peterborough paramedics: police

London, Ont. police called after man displayed replica firearm in ambulance

Two ambulance staff assaulted while caring for patient in Hamilton

Patient hits paramedic and steals his own ambulance in Flower's Cove, say police

Punched, spit on and sexually assaulted: Durham paramedic chief raises the alarm about workplace violence

Meth-addled man jailed after throwing bricks at first responders, police say

Niagara EMS worker says they've become 'shiny targets' for anger

Scissors-wielding assailant subdued after three people injured in London

Man displayed

MUSKRAT DAM MAN SENTENCED FOR ATTACK ON THUNDER BAY PARAMEDIC

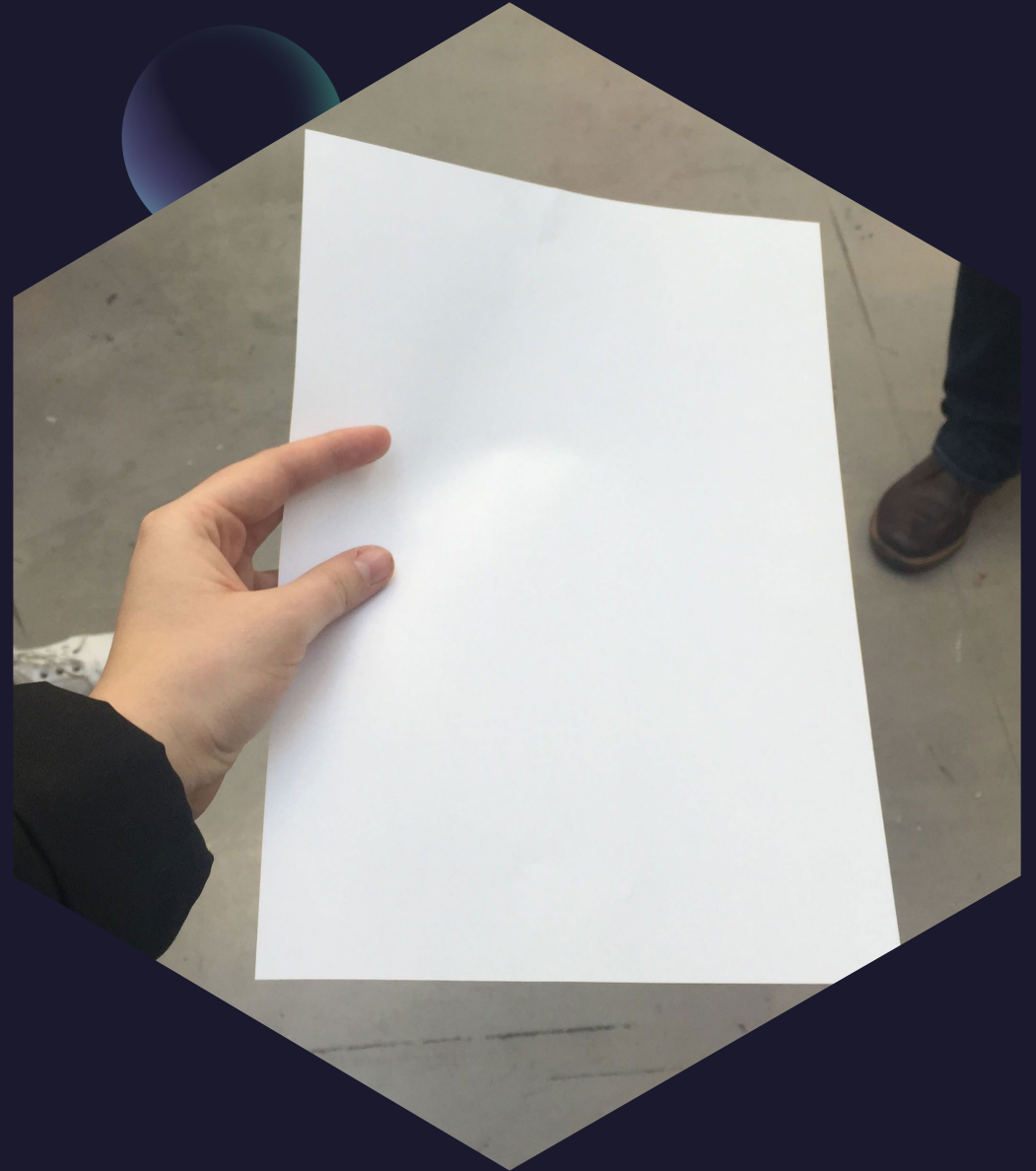
Halifax police officer, paramedic assaulted during wild Christmas Eve traffic stop

Paramedics threatened while providing life-saving measures in Penticton

Ambulances pelted with rocks during protest; health workers, patients face added stress, delays

Durham paramedics contending with staffing, violence and hospital delays as pandemic continues

Under-reporting



Under-reporting

a lack of injury or lost time

lack of supervisory or co-worker support

fear of reprisal or blame

belief that reporting will not lead to any positive changes

common perception that violence is simply “part of the job”

verbal abuse is “common”

reporting violence may be perceived as a sign of weakness

reluctance to report unintentional violence (i.e., patients with dementia)

Protecting paramedics

- legislative protections in Australia
 - “obstructing or hindering an ambulance officer by an act of violence”
 - entitled to refuse to:
 - provide treatment if safety is at risk when attending a volatile or dangerous situation
 - treat patients until the police arrive to ensure their own safety is not at risk
- legislative protections in Canada
 - none of the above
 - no different for paramedics as it is for civilians (i.e., members of the public)



Consequences of violence



Consequences of violence

- the number lost work-days for EMS personnel due to violence related injuries is 22 times higher than the national average
- in 2016, the NAEMT reported that 3,500 EMS practitioners sustained a serious enough injury to require a visit to the Emergency Department
- acts of violence against paramedics jeopardizes the quality of patient care that paramedics strive to deliver
- leads to immense financial loss in the health sector



Consequences of violence

- violence in the paramedic profession has been linked to:
 - intent to leave the profession
 - anxiety and symptoms of burnout
 - psychological strain
 - increased risk of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI)
 - increased absenteeism
 - sleep difficulties
 - negative impact on relationships with others



Consequences of violence

- second-order effects
- for paramedics who experience violence, the consequences can – and do – extend to their work partners / colleagues, spouses and life partners, and family members including children





**The way to get
started is to
quit talking
and begin
doing.**

Walt Disney

Opportunities

RESEARCH

- ✓ national scope
- ✓ 'family' and 'Family'
- ✓ sexual trauma



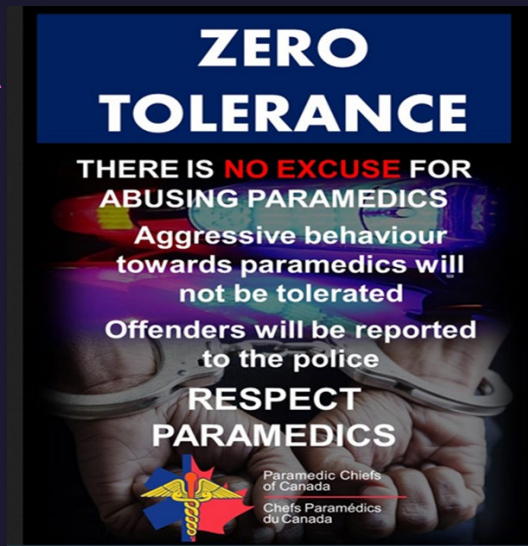
PUBLIC AWARENESS

- ✓ PSA
- ✓ social media
- ✓ telemedia
- ✓ print media



Opportunities

STAKEHOLDER ADVOCACY



POLICY & LEGISLATION


- ✓ House of Commons Standing Committee on Health
- ✓ Criminal Code of Canada





Summary

Violence against paramedics is not a “you” problem, it’s not a “them” problem – it’s an “us” problem. We must work together to put an end to the victimization of the thousands of paramedics in this country who day-in and day-out dedicate their lives caring for “us”.

NEVER DO ANYTHING
that
YOU WOULDN'T
WANT TO
EXPLAIN
— *to the* 
PARAMEDICS

Thank You

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