Assessing the Adequacy of Behavioral Health Training for Collegiate EMTs

Ali M. Baird & **Carol R.T. Day**, RN, MSN, CNS

POSTER PRESENTATION ABSTRACT | ORIGINAL RESEARCH CATEGORY

Introduction: Increased prevalence and underreporting of mental health conditions on college campuses implies collegiate Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) may treat more patients with acute behavioral concerns. Georgetown Emergency Response Medical Service (GERMS), a collegiate based EMS (CBEMS) group, experienced a 450% increase in behavioral calls from 2014 to 2016. This study aimed to assess EMT self-reported preparedness for behavioral emergencies obtained from the EMT course and continuing education provided by GERMS. A secondary aim was to compare behavioral call experience to preparedness.

Methods: In March 2018, 60 members of GERMS completed an online 14-question survey to assess preparedness and helpfulness of educational material about behavioral health training using 0 (meaning least) to 5 (meaning most) Likert scales and multiple-choice questions. All metrics from the survey are self-reported. Coverage of behavioral health topics in the EMT course, helpfulness of educational experiences about behavioral health provided by GERMS, and behavioral call experience were each compared independently to preparedness.

Results: All participants reported lower preparedness when they could not recall behavioral health topics covered in their initial EMT course as seen by an independent sample t test of differences between recall and preparedness for panic attacks (3.96 for recalled, 3.12 for unrecalled; p=0.002), thoughts of self-harm without suicidal ideation (3.54 for recalled, 2.69 for unrecalled; p=0.005), suicidal ideations (3.12 for recalled, 1.80 for unrecalled; p=0.004), and suicide attempts (3.13 for recalled, 1.81 for unrecalled; p=<0.001). Debriefs following behavioral emergencies was the only GERMS educational experience positively correlated with higher preparedness using Spearman's rho correlation. Using an independent sample t-test, behavioral call experience produced higher preparedness for all types of behavioral emergencies.

Discussion/Conclusions: Coverage of mental health topics in CBEMS groups is associated with perceived preparedness. CBEMS groups have an opportunity to improve behavioral health training to respond to the growing mental health crisis.

Author Affiliations: From Department of Human Science, School of Nursing and Health Studies, Georgetown University; Georgetown Emergency Response Medical Service – both in Washington, DC, USA (A.M.B.). From Department of Human Science, School of Nursing and Health Studies, Georgetown University; Georgetown Emergency Response Medical Service; Health Education Services, Georgetown University – both in Washington, DC, USA (C.R.T.D.).

Address for Correspondence: Ali Baird | Email: alimbaird@me.com