

Families of military and first responders living with post-traumatic stress (PTS) often struggle without enough support

Medavie releases report from PTS roundtable outlining the challenges families face.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ottawa, ON –Medavie and its partners are proud to release a report on the support needed for families of first responders and serving and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces with PTS. Based on a recent roundtable hosted with Wounded Warriors Canada, Vanier Institute of the Family, and the Mental Health Commission of Canada, *Supporting Families of Serving and Retired Members of the Canadian Armed Forces and First Responders Living with Post-Traumatic Stress – A first interim report* provides key takeaways and strategic priorities from the discussion. The event brought together researchers, health care providers, and executives of community organizations within, and external to, the Canadian Armed Forces and first responder community.

In recent years there has been growing awareness of PTS among first responders and military, and, as a result, services are improving, but there's more work to be done. At the same time, evidence-based programs directed at families are limited and often unavailable, inaccessible, unaffordable or inequitable. Family members play such an important role in supporting a person with PTS, but they face immense pressures themselves and need assistance, too.

The experts at the roundtable painted an emotional picture of the many challenges faced by first responders and military with PTS and their families. Oftentimes these individuals are afraid to share what they're going through or worry about exposing their loved ones to vicarious trauma, where hearing about the person's disturbing experiences can impact the family member's mental health as well. Family members often do not understand what's going on, don't know how to help even though they're often desperate to, and may not even be sure where to go for assistance.

Medavie plans to convene a follow-up roundtable with the same experts and add the voice of family members in continuing this important discussion. For the full whitepaper, visit [Medavie.ca](https://www.medavie.ca).

Quotes

“As a not-for-profit health solutions partner, Medavie is committed to improving the wellbeing of Canadians. With PTS being a core cause of our Foundation, we recognized an unmet need when it came to support available to families and it was important Medavie be part of finding a solution. That’s why we are proud to have partnered with such leading organizations and to have assembled this impressive group of experts to help find a better path forward. This report details opportunities for us to make an impact in the future, and it’s just the first step in what we hope will be an ongoing process.”

– *Bernard Lord, CEO, Medavie*

“The number of times I’ve interviewed someone and they’ve said, ‘I have to take a deep breath when I put the key in the door. I have to brace myself when I go back into the home, and as soon as I go into the home I can hear what it’s going to look like. I know by how he responds.’ And this is from adult children, this is from siblings, this is from parents, this is not just from spouses.”

– *Dr. Heidi Cramm, Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research*

“In a recent study we just finished... we asked thousands of public safety personnel, ‘who’s your go-to, who do you want to talk to first, who’s your first resource?’ and by an unequivocal margin, it’s their spouse or their family. They go home and that’s who they talk to.”

– *Dr. Nick Carleton, University of Regina & Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment*

Quick Facts*

- Up to 32% of Canadians in high-risk groups such as military, police and paramedics will suffer from PTSD in their lifetimes.
- 71% of Canadian veterans receiving disability benefits for a mental health condition have PTSD.
- Canada’s one-year prevalence rate of PTSD is higher than that of Europe, South Africa, Mexico and Japan.

PTS Roundtable Participants Included:

- **Dr. Raj Bhatla**, *Psychiatrist-in-Chief and Chief of Staff, Royal Ottawa Health Care Group*
- **Dr. Nick Carleton**, *Professor of Psychology, University of Regina; Scientific Director, Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment*
- **Dr. Heidi Cramm**, *Associate Scientist, Strategic Initiatives, Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research*
- **Lt.-General (ret'd) Roméo Dallaire**, *National Patron, Wounded Warriors Canada*
- **Dr. Hester Dunlap**, *Clinical Lead, Trauma and Psychological Injury Program/Concurrent Trauma and Addiction Program, Bellwood Health Services*
- **Lt.-Colonel (ret'd) Dr. Alexandra Heber**, *Chief Psychiatrist, Veterans Affairs Canada; Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, University of Ottawa*
- **Colonel Dr. Rakesh Jetly**, *Senior Psychiatrist and Mental Health Clinical Advisor to the Surgeon General; First Chair in Military Mental Health at the Canadian Armed Forces*
- **Scott Maxwell**, *Executive Director, Wounded Warriors Canada*
- **Dr. Margaret McKinnon**, *Homewood Chair in Mental Health and Trauma; Associate Chair of Research, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University; Psychologist, Mood Disorders Program, St. Joseph's Healthcare; Senior Scientist, Homewood Research Institute*
- **Micheal Pietrus**, *Director, Mental Health First Aid Canada & Opening Minds, Mental Health Commission of Canada*
- **Dr. Tina Saryeddine**, *Executive Director, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs*
- **Nora Spinks**, *CEO, Vanier Institute of the Family*
- **Dr. Samuel Weiss**, *Scientific Director, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction*

*Sourced information/stats reference PTSD. While post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the term most often used in public discussion, the addition of “disorder” means it is a clinically diagnosed condition. Post-traumatic stress (PTS) was used during the roundtable as it is more inclusive, applying to those experiencing symptoms, but who may not yet be formally diagnosed.

About Medavie

Medavie is a national health solutions partner that integrates benefits management, health management and health care delivery. Together, with our more than 6,400 employees, we are committed to providing innovative solutions that improve the wellbeing of Canadians.

As a not-for-profit organization, Medavie oversees [Medavie Blue Cross](#), a premier all-in-one benefits carrier and public health program administrator, and [Medavie Health Services](#), a national primary health care solutions organization and the largest private provider of EMS management services in Canada.

We are proud to commit an annual social dividend to the [Medavie Health Foundation](#) to support programs and initiatives aimed at addressing some of our country's most pressing physical and mental health care challenges.

For more information

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