



Research at a glance

Self-Injurious Behaviour in Treatment Centres: Correlates, Trajectories, and Descriptive Analysis

KEY WORDS: *self-injurious behaviour, mental health, treatment centres*

What it means

Men who reside in treatment centres and have a history of non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) are more likely to meet the diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder and to self-report higher levels of aggression and childhood abuse than those without a history of NSSI. Treatment planning for offenders who engage in NSSI should be individualized, considering gender, the origins and functions of NSSI, and offenders' mental health issues. Findings from this study will assist the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) in further developing population management strategies and interventions for offenders who engage in NSSI.

What we found

Compared to men with no history of NSSI, men with a history of NSSI scored significantly higher on measures of aggression. They were also more likely to meet the diagnostic criteria for any mental disorder, non-alcohol substance abuse or dependence, antisocial personality disorder, and borderline personality disorder. Unlike previous research findings with federally sentenced men and women, there were no significant differences in methods of coping between those with and without a history of NSSI.

Anger and aggression were correlated with, and predictive of, NSSI. Additionally, participants with a history of NSSI were significantly more likely to have experienced childhood sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and physical abuse, as well as, emotional neglect. Anger was found to be more predictive of NSSI for men (in institutions and treatment centres) than for women. Sexual orientation was found to be correlated with NSSI in women and men in treatment centres but not for men in non-treatment centre institutions. Childhood sexual abuse was predictive of NSSI, posttraumatic stress disorder, and borderline personality disorder for men in treatment centres.

Why we did this study

NSSI is a challenging behaviour that poses serious health and safety threats to offenders and staff within the CSC making the treatment and prevention of NSSI a priority. Previous research in CSC has

focused on men and women offenders; however, men residing in treatment centres were excluded. The purpose of this study is to improve understanding of NSSI in this specific subpopulation.

What we did

A total of 85 men residing in five regional treatment centres participated in the study. Regional treatment centres are accredited psychiatric institutions operated by the CSC that provide residential treatment to offenders with the most serious mental health needs. Men with a known history of NSSI were selected for recruitment, along with a matched control group of men who did not have a known history of NSSI. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and a series of questionnaires designed to assess their NSSI and factors associated with their NSSI, such as mental health, impulsivity, aggression, and childhood trauma were completed. Comparisons were made between men with and without a history of NSSI. In addition, the origins of the behaviour were explored.

For more information

Power, J. & Beaudette, J. (2014) *Self-injurious behaviour in treatment centres: Correlates, trajectories, and descriptive analysis* (Research Report R-303). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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