

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA**

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

# Implementation of the Electronic Monitoring Research Pilot

*Electronic Monitoring (EM) is being utilized appropriately by Parole Officers, but its availability has a limited influence on decision making.*

## Why we did this study

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is conducting a national Electronic Monitoring (EM) Research Pilot to examine the effectiveness of EM in promoting positive community outcomes for federal offenders while maintaining public safety. This report focuses on the operational aspects of the pilot and EM's contribution to the decision-making processes of Parole Officers (POs), an area that has received little attention.

## What we did

Data for eligible EM offenders was collected between the July 27, 2015 implementation and March 31, 2017. During the study period, a total of 442 offenders were referred for EM, representing a total of 512 EM supervision periods.

A total of 294 EM Participants who had ever been active on EM were compared to a control group of 294 offenders matched on demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, Indigenous status), offence and risk information (e.g., sex offender status, reintegration potential), and release characteristics (e.g., region of supervision, supervision type, special conditions, residency). Staff with experience in EM ( $N = 221$ ) also had the opportunity to provide feedback on the pilot through an online questionnaire.

## What we found

As of March 31, 2017, there were 104 active EM supervision periods, 102 successfully completed periods, and 147 periods terminated early due to the offender being removed prior to the end of their term. The device was worn for a mean of 115.9 days ( $SD = 77.8$ ) for offenders who had successfully completed EM and 60.8 days ( $SD = 60.3$ ) for those who were removed early. Offenders are being removed from EM once case management staff are satisfied with the offenders' behaviour in the community.

While EM programs have often focused primarily on monitoring low-risk offenders, the referral criteria for the research pilot are restricted to moderate and high risk offenders in an effort to prevent a "net-widening" effect. The vast majority of offenders met the referral criteria established for the pilot. In the few cases where offenders were exempted from the eligibility requirements, there were case-specific considerations that warranted their

inclusion. The majority of staff had positive views of the referral criteria for the research pilot.

As one part of the overall community strategy, EM did not appear to contribute to decisions related to revocations or residency as the EM Participants and control group were similar in the percentage of revocations and the length of residency periods. Some differences were observed in suspensions, but none that reached significance. While the percentage of suspensions did not differ between groups, EM Participants were more likely to be suspended due to protection of society or to prevent a breach of conditions, versus due to a breach of conditions in the control group. This suggests that POs may be utilizing information obtained through EM to suspend offenders prior to a breach occurring. EM Participants also had a slightly higher rate of suspensions that were cancelled, withdrawn, or expired, while the control group had a higher rate of suspensions that were issued or executed.

## What it means

The findings of this study suggest that EM is being utilized by POs appropriately as a discretionary tool to monitor supervision conditions. EM may be influencing the decision making of correctional staff in regards to suspensions (e.g., putting offenders on EM within a week of a suspension being cancelled or withdrawn), but not in other key areas of community supervision such as residency and revocations of release. However, none of the differences between groups reached significance and should be interpreted with caution. Future research will further examine the community supervision outcomes of EM Participants in more depth.

## For more information

Hanby, L., Nelson, A., & Farrell MacDonald, S. (2018). *Implementation of the Electronic Monitoring Research Pilot* (Research Report R-419). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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