



Chaire de recherche sur la maltraitance
envers les personnes âgées

Research Chair on Mistreatment of Older Adults



Police Intervention in Situations of Mistreatment of Older Adults

IPAM Team

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Police Intervention to Counter Mistreatment of Older Adults

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Canada 



Introduction



Police role :

- **Prevention** : awareness development, dispensing of prevention tips
- **Detection** : identification of mistreated older adults
- **Follow-up** : investigation, prosecution notice to the Director of public prosecution, etc.



Introduction



Our study (July 2013 - June 2016), aims to **develop a model of police practices to counter older adult mistreatment**. It comprises **7 steps**:

- **Provide an updated review of police practices to counter older adult mistreatment;**
- **Document the needs of the police officers of the City of Montreal Police Department (SPVM) regarding detection, monitoring and multiagency practice;**
- **Develop one or several detection and monitoring tools or adapt the existing ones;**
- **Implement one or several tools in the SPVM;**
- **Implement support mechanisms to police practice;**
- **Review and adjust the implemented tools and mechanisms;**
- **Extend the use of this new practice model to police services across Canada.**



Introduction

This presentation focuses on the most promising results in terms of innovative practice, which pertain to the work of the **community relations officers** (community policing or prevention policing).



Step one



**Provide an updated review of
police practices to counter
older adult mistreatment**



Method – Literature reviews

- **2 systematic reviews**, published between **2008 and 2014**
- Databases in **French**: Banque de données en santé publique (BDSP), Cairn, Érudit, Francis et Repère
- Databases in **English**: Abstracts in Social Gerontology, Ageline, Medline, Pascal, PsycInfo, Soc Index with full text, Social Work Abstracts and Scopus.
- **Inter-rater validation of the articles' abstracts**. Rejection of 166 items due to language (other than French, English or Spanish), or to non-relevance of content to the targeted problem
- **First review: police practices to counter older adult mistreatment** (n = 28)
- **Second review: role of the police in multiagency practices to counter older adult mistreatment** (n = 37)
- Completion of a reading grid for each article (**18 item analysis**)



Method –



Inventory of the practices found in Québec and Canada

- Target population: **all police services in Quebec (n = 26)** and those of **all major Canadian cities (n = 104** - subject to change depending on changes in the collection of data from cities of 500,000 inhabitants and more)
- Inventory of available **information on the Internet** (including research reports, practice guidelines, training contents, prevention tools and detection tools, etc.).
- Sending a **letter co-signed by the Director of the SPVM and the Chairholder**
- **Personalized telephone communication** with each police service in Quebec and with all police services in Canada which use a specific approach to reach older adults, and those with a population of more than 500 000 inhabitants (still in progress)



Highlights at the intersection of these two data collections



- The **scientific literature is mostly descriptive**; police practices with regard to training and intervention (prevention, detection, monitoring and evaluation) are not evaluated.
- Most of the texts originate from the **United States** or the **United Kingdom**.
- Only **2 of the 65 articles are fully dedicated to police** work with mistreated older adults. In the other texts, the issue is addressed among other issues.
- Difficult to define the specific **police work as a part of a multiagency** approach to counter mistreatment of older adults
- **Few texts provide data on police intervention** with regards to the specific function of the police officer (patrol officer, community relations officer, investigator, etc.).



Highlights at the intersection of these two data collections (2)



- Several police departments have developed **more or less well articulated approaches aimed at reaching seniors**, including those who are mistreated, which are available on the Internet, in the form of gray literature or when shared in the context of direct exchanges.
- **Winning practices** rely on the appointment of a **champion officer** (in many cases, a community relations officer or neighborhood police) or on a **team specialized to counter older adult mistreatment** whose actions are aimed at prevention and follow-up (including investigations, which implies possible involvement with the judicial system).
- The **importance of first detection** by the police patrol is also put forward.



Step 2



Document the needs of the members of the Montreal Police Department (SPVM) with regard to detection, follow-up and multiagency practice





Methods

- An **online survey** carried out from late November 2013 to early January 2014, addressed to all SPVM officers who may be called upon to intervene with seniors (excluding police officers devoted to organized crime, cavalry, etc.) (N = 2172).
- 661 completed questionnaires, representing a response rate of **30.4%**;
- **Themes addressed** in the survey: situations of mistreatment, knowledge of the problem, interventions with seniors, multiagency practice, received and desired training.



Results

Frequency of cases

Community relations officers (neighborhood police) are the police officers who receive the most calls or file assignments concerning seniors (**80.4% receive at least one call or file concerning a senior per work cycle**).

- **Avenue for analysis:** Community relations officers are increasingly recognized by the public, and particularly by the "most vulnerable populations" as privileged interlocutors to contact or involve in situations concerning seniors.



Results (2)

The **single indicator** of mistreatment which is most frequently cited by police in detection of a situation of mistreatment is the presence of **physical injury**.

- **Avenue for analysis:** This may reflect, upon detection of abuse, a greater comfort level of police officers with situations presenting signs that may be associated with a "criminal act" in a more obvious manner, in comparison with a lesser comfort level in situations where abuse is psychological in nature.
- However, when **indicators are regrouped in categories**, police name **more elements related to psychological abuse** than to physical abuse, which seems to nuance the previous information



Results (3)

Responding to referrals

With regard to **police officers in all functions**, interventions with older adults experiencing mistreatment rarely consist of **follow-ups of referrals** made by **community partners** (9.1%) or **health and social services network** (9.4%). However, when specifically analyzing the work of **community relations officers**, it is noted that the incidence where the intervention was initiated by community partners (25.4%) and the network of health and social services (25.1%) is significantly higher.

- **Avenue for analysis:** This may reflect the efforts of the community relations officers to forge partnerships with community resources, which increasingly recognize these agents as pivots in multiagency practices within police organizations.



Results (4)



Reaching in and out for community police officers

Community relations officers are the most called-upon resource (55.6% of interventions) on the part of other officers dealing with situations involving seniors. Concerning community relations officers, they **more frequently involve partners outside the police** force, such as health centers and social service and community organizations that provide services to seniors, compared to other categories of police officers.

- **Avenue for analysis:** These two findings indicate that the police follow the existing internal procedure of reference to community relations officers and that the latter are effective in targeting external partners to provide multiagency follow-up of situations of mistreatment.



Conclusion

- Need to **better document police practices to counter mistreatment of older adults** in order to better grasp its specificities. To this end, **further exploration of the gray literature** as well as direct **contacts with the various police services** are the actions that we will focus on in the coming months.
- From the initial analyzes of the survey, the **value of community policing** clearly emerges, this type of police action being already considered a **winning practice** as a support to patrol work and in connection with the various services that can contribute to help mistreated older adults.



Conclusion

- We are completing an **in-depth case study with 2/33 very different police stations**, We conducted focus groups with all patrol officers, held interviews with executive police officers, investigators and partners (other organizations in the public networks, private or non-profit organization of the territory) and proceeded to direct observations of patrol officers' interventions.



Conclusion

- *Vigie-Aînés* committee of the SPVM : **advisory committee for this project.**
- **In the last week of May 2014, we started triangulating these data.**
- **In years 2 and 3 of the project, we will develop a training program, devise tools and implement them.** In the end, the police will be better empowered to recognize situations of older adult mistreatment and to intervene.

Thank you for your attention !

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