Topic

Developing and validating a tool to measure moral injury in a forensic psychiatric population

Key question

How can measuring moral injury among forensic patients help us understand their guilt, shame and other emotions?

Project aims

Moral injury can result when people perpetrate, fail to prevent or witness actions against their values and beliefs. The guilt and shame at the core of moral injury have been linked with substance use, distress, and psychopathology. Yet moral injury has only been studied in limited populations (veterans, physicians, nurses).

This multi-site project seeks to develop the first validated tool to measure moral injury and its consequences in forensic psychiatric patients. The Forensic Moral Injury scale will help us understand the lives of forensic patients with moral injury. The scale addresses gaps in our understanding of forensic offenders' experiences of moral emotion and distress and how these impact progress through treatment and recovery.

Helpful terms

- **Forensic patients:** Patients with serious mental illnesses who have become involved with the criminal justice system.

- **Moral injury**: A response to witnessing or taking part in actions that go against a person's values and morals, resulting in feelings of guilt, shame, anger, and disgust.

Activities at Waypoint

This project is led by St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. To support the overall project objectives, Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care will be:

- Collecting and sharing survey data in forensic units at Waypoint as a collaborating site.

- Supporting the validation of the Forensic Moral Injury Scale.

- Exploring data collected at Waypoint to understand our patients better. Using our site findings to enhance Waypoint policies and guidelines to serve our patients.

- Preparing site manuscripts based on our results on Waypoint forensic patients.

Principal investigator: Bruno Losier, PhD, CPsych, ABPP-CN; St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton
Waypoint lead: Soyeon Kim, PhD

✉ WaypointResearchInstitute@waypointcentre.ca

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

Waypoint CENTRE for MENTAL HEALTH CARE
CENTRE de SOINS de SANTÉ MENTALE