



# HMCS Chicoutimi Town Hall 18 June 2008

Mental Health Disorders Secondary to  
Operational Exposure

Kenneth J. Cooper MD, FRCPC  
Acting Clinical Leader – OTSSC Atlantic



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## Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Immediate Mental Health Response:
  - Psychiatrist, Mental Health Nurse and Social Worker were sent and met crew on their arrival in Scotland
  - Gave education briefings to the crew on symptoms to watch for
  - Stayed on to be available to meet as needed with individual crewmembers/small groups on an informal basis



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## Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Intermediate and Long-term Mental Health Response:
  - Mental Health Nurse continued to be the point-of-contact for crewmembers
  - Each crewmember was contacted by the Mental Health Nurse 30 days after return to Canada
  - Members were encouraged to seek referral through their GDMO if symptoms were worrisome
  - Referrals to OTSSC were made from the time of the first contacts in Scotland through to the present time



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## Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Any mental health disorder can result from a significant traumatic exposure – not just PTSD
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder:
  - Traumatic Event
  - Intense Emotional Response
  - Re-experiencing Symptoms
  - Avoidance Symptoms
  - Hyper arousal Symptoms (Sleep disruption, irritability)



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# Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Not inevitable (Resiliency & Expectation of Health)
  - Does not go away on its own (but symptoms can come and go)
  - Very treatable (especially if treated early)
  - Not a “Career-ender”



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# Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Very important to see as early as possible after the trauma
  - BUT it is never too late!!!!
  - Have returned a number of service members to full duty
  - Of those who are released, many are released due to ongoing medical/physical limitations
  - At the very least, those released due to ongoing mental health reasons can lead productive civilian lives



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# Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - People with PTSD do tend to have more physical complaints than people with other mental health disorders
  - Often present to GDMO/Family Physicians first for physical complaints
  - DO NOT have an absence of PTSD symptoms – these are present but not the person's initial focus



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## Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Due to the coming and going of symptoms, especially the re-experiencing symptoms, people with PTSD often do not come forward immediately because they perceive themselves as “getting over it”
  - Often it is a significant other/SPOUSE that finally tells the person to get help



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# Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Continuity of Care - if a member is posted during treatment:
- We communicate:
  - Five OTSSC's across the country
    - Halifax
    - Valcartier
    - Ottawa
    - Edmonton
    - Esquimalt
  - MIR's/Sick Bays and local therapy providers
  - New VAC clinics across the country



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## Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Continuity of Care – if released:
- Agreement with VAC
  - We will see both serving members and veterans in all clinics
  - If a service member in treatment at OTSSC Atlantic is released during treatment, he continues to receive treatment through us as a veteran



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## Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- What if a service member releases without ever having come forward for assessment and then decides to come forward?
- An OTSSC assessment can be accessed through the civilian Family Physician and VAC.
- It is never too late!!!



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# Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- Resources for Mental Health Assessment
  - Main resource continues to be the GDMO/PA
  - Psychosocial Services at CF Health Services Centre Atlantic
  - Chaplain (721-8892)
  - OTSSC Atlantic (721-5703)
  - OSISS – Dave McArdle (426-7328)
  - OSISS Family Support – Nadine de Blois (292-0353)
  - [www.osiss.ca](http://www.osiss.ca)
  - CF Members Assistance Program (CFMAP) (1-800-268-7708)



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# Chicoutimi-Related Mental Health Issues

- QUESTIONS



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