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Unreported Concussions within Law Enforcement Officers

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OBJECTIVE

Understand the degree to which concussions go unreported among members of the Law Enforcement community.

SETTING AND DESIGN

Descriptive survey research study targeting Law Enforcement Officers. Officers varied in gender, rank, nationality, years of experience and training level. The dependent variable was unreported concussions within this group. The survey was distributed via a QR code/link that was shared via social media.

PARTICIPANTS

(N=77) survey responses were completed. 67.5% (n=52) male, 23.4% (n=18) female, 9.1% (n=7) not answer. By race: 77.9% (n=60) white, 6.5% (n=5) black/African American, 3.9% (n=3) American Indian/Alaska Native, 1.3% (n=1) Asian, 1.3% (n=1) other, 9.1% (n=7) no answer.

INTERVENTION

A 19-question survey utilizing Qualtrics. It was distributed snowball-style via social networks in academic and Law Enforcement communities.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

Survey consisted of multiple-choice answers, fill in the blank and drop-down answers. Questions 15-18 were demographic questions.

RESULTS

Hypothesis one: significant difference between men/women reporting concussion symptoms. Results showed 32.7% (n=17) males did not report vs 16.7% (n=3) females. Hypothesis two: significant difference between novice/veteran reporting concussion symptoms. 20% (n=5) novice did not report vs

28.6% (n=14) veteran. Hypothesis three: department officers were more likely to report symptoms than SWAT/RERT/Special Task Force. A crosstabulation showed that 32.3% (n=10 out of 31) participants who are/were members of a SWAT/RERT/Special Task Force had concussion symptoms and did not report. A Chi Square revealed a significant difference between SWAT/RERT/Special Task Forces and non-SWAT/RERT/Special Task Forces $\chi^2 = 18.59, p < .001$. Members of Law Enforcement who were/had been members of SWAT/RERT/Special Task Forces were less likely to report head injuries. Results also indicated that 62.3% (n=48) did not have an Athletic Trainer on staff, 27.2% (n=21) did have an Athletic Trainer on staff, 10.4% (n=8) did not answer. When comparing the number of reported head injuries between units that have an AT vs no AT, 38.1% (n=8) did not report with an AT on staff and 25% (n=12) did not report without an AT on staff. Showing that there are less unreported concussions on units that have an AT on staff.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that there is a lack of concussion reporting to a supervisor/medical staff among SWAT/RERT/Special Task Forces. Therefore, having an AT on staff can help to facilitate proper injury reporting and evaluation, offer effective treatment, and provide proper education. Departments with an Athletic Trainer on staff can expect their officers to stay healthy on the job and return to work faster. Further research to understand unreported concussions among Law Enforcement Officers should involve a larger sample size.

KEY WORDS: Concussion, Reporting, Mild Traumatic Brain Injury, mTBI, Law Enforcement

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