
Editorial: International Journal of Emergency Services, volume 12, issue 3

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As we draw close to the end of 2023, we are excited to bring the editorial for the third issue of Volume 12 in 2023. In this issue, the *International Journal of Emergency Services (IJES)* is publishing ten original articles that explore a range of subjects relevant to ambulance, fire and rescue services and the broader emergency management agenda across three continents. These papers address important aspects relating to the impact of COVID-19 and home working for frontline staff, mental stress symptoms, equality and diversity, evidence-based approaches and learning styles in the student population, among others. We are confident that the papers bring new insights, thus making an important contribution to the body of knowledge and thereby improving scholarly and practitioner understanding of the issues examined.

Our first article, co-authored by Rowena Hill, Tabitha Oakes and lee Wilkes, is entitled “The development of an evidence-based approach to inform learning and practices within the UK fire and rescue service”. This paper reviews academic and grey literature and an operational incident data review to scope disciplines and areas of academia that are actively engaged in research relevant to the fire and rescue service. Building on previous research (Weiss, 1979; Murphy *et al.*, 2019), the paper then maps the different academic literature relevant to fire research into clear disciplines in relation to the breadth of current activities undertaken by the fire and rescue service across the United Kingdom.

In our next article entitled “The evaluation of safe and well visits as part of the prevention activities of fire and rescue services in England”, Katarzyna Lakoma and Peter Murphy evaluate the “safe and well visits using a case study approach by examining the response of one English Fire and Rescue Service. Based upon their analysis, the paper highlights considerable scope for improvement of “safe and well visits” and the need for effective benchmarking across services, including commissioning a more appropriate evaluation methodology such as a social return on investment. Findings from this study are relevant to a policy, practice and public assurance perspective.

In our third article entitled “Extinguishing injustice: growing equity, diversity and inclusion in Canadian fire departments,” Keith Fredin evaluates the value and necessity of greater equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in Canadian fire departments, highlighting the role of leadership in implementing a culture of embracing EDI. Reviewing the current literature, the paper has highlighted the usefulness of organizational change models focusing on improved communication techniques needed to allow for more EDI. Extending the definition of harm to include discrimination, the paper argues why EDI needs to be embedded in the purpose and shared goals of fire departments. Further research into various leadership styles, cultural change models and their corresponding effects on increasing EDI follows from this analysis (see Wankhade and Murphy, 2023).

The impact of sociodemographic factors, sleep disturbance and smoking on firefighters is next examined by Javad Hashempour, Zubaida Shebani and Jeffrey Kimble. In their co-authored piece entitled “Mental distress symptoms among Muscat firefighters: the impact of sociodemographic factors, sleep disturbance and smoking”, the authors have examined the relationship between risk factors and mental health problems among Muscat firefighters. The data were collected from 110 firefighters using the Brief Symptom Inventory –18 (BSI-18) to identify clinical cases in each of the three scales of the assessment. The prevalence of



anxiety, somatic and depression cases among firefighters was found to be 11.8, 10.9 and 10%, respectively. These findings have wider implications and for the development and monitoring of treatment programs for firefighters.

Paige Sable, Fengyan Tang, Jenifer A. Swab, Sheila Roth and Daniel Rosen, in their paper entitled “EMS workers on the frontline of the opioid epidemic: effects of sleep and social support on depression”, also examine the impact of overdose calls for opioids and attitudes of EMS workers toward individuals with substance use disorders on EMS workers’ mental well-being. This cross-sectional study surveyed over 600 EMS workers across Pennsylvania, USA, on demographic variables, frequency of overdose calls, attitudes towards opioid use and naloxone administration as measures of mental health. Using multiple logistic regression models, the study found a significant relationship between more negative perceptions about opioid use/naloxone and the likelihood that EMS workers might experience depression and between number of overdose calls EMS workers responded to and likelihood of depression, which appeared to be alleviated by improvements in sleep, training, and social support. The study’s findings have relevance across wider EMS settings ([Greenberg *et al.*, 2020](#); [Lawn *et al.*, 2020](#)).

On a related theme, our sixth article is entitled “From EAP to BHAP: a conceptual framework to develop and implement a comprehensive behavioral health access program within the fire service.” Co-authored by Kellie ODare, Chris Bator and Lance Butler *et al.*, the paper articulates the results of a comprehensive literature review and grassroots outreach with a dozen American first responder organizations to present an operationalized framework in developing customized behavioral health access program (BHAP) programs over the historically used behavioral health interventions through an employee-assistance programs (EAP), which have their own its limitations and challenges. While the results of this review focus on BHAP within the fire service, this framework is also applicable across all first-responder professions such as the ambulance and police services.

The next three articles in this issue explore practices in the ambulance service. Mike Brady and Edward Harry – in their paper entitled “What effects did home working have on 999 clinician practice from one UK ambulance service during the Covid-19 pandemic?” – explore the experience of moving clinicians from Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) to working at home. The data were collected from semi-structured interviews with 15 telephone nurses and paramedics from one UK ambulance service with recent remote assessment experience from within an EOC. Four main themes were identified namely performance, support, distractions and interruptions and confidence in decision-making. This study produced mixed findings. While home-based clinicians felt their productivity had increased, there were mixed feelings over the level of support they perceived they now received, despite the mechanisms of support being largely the same. However, there were missed opportunities to learn from listening to others’ clinical practice. The study findings, though they pertain to one ambulance trust, can potentially help inform clinicians, supervisors and employers working remotely in wider settings.

Our eight article aims to determine the differences in the involvement of pre-hospital emergency physicians (PHEPs) within the ambulance services. In their article entitled “Participation of pre-hospital emergency physicians at ambulance missions in Germany’s federal states”, Thomas Hofmann and Luis M€ockel examine this issue drawing from their research in Germany. The federal state specific PHEP rates from 2012 to 2017 were analyzed using publicly available data or data provided by the responsible state ministries. The study findings revealed significant variations in the PHEP rates between the 16 federal states, ranging between 19 and 41%. The correlations indicated possible connections but did not show clear causes within state-specific characteristics, however, indicating that occupational autonomy of paramedics differed between the states. Further research is suggested to improve the evidence base on this important issue ([Vangen and Huxham, 2012](#)).

“Thinking styles of Australasian paramedics and paramedicine students” is the title of our ninth article and is co-authored by Toby Keene, Kristen Pammer, Eryn Newman and Bill Lord. The paper investigates the all-important but under-researched phenomenon of the appropriateness of “decision-making styles” by the paramedics who work in a range of settings including emergency and primary care, often in unscheduled, unpredictable or dynamic environments. Surveying a sample of over 100 Australian and New Zealand paramedics and over 100 paramedic students, the study measured active open-mindedness (AOT), close mindedness (CMT), preference for intuitive thinking (PIT) and preference for effortful thinking (PET). Participants reported high levels of AOT and PET, with comparatively lower scores for CMT and PIT. Active open mindedness was the only thinking style significantly associated with cognitive reflection once the other measures were controlled. Implications for learning from different decision-making techniques follow from this analysis (Kapucu *et al.*, 2010; Wankhade *et al.*, 2019).

Our last article in this issue aims to explore the usefulness of a measurement scale as a valid and reliable measurement tool in coping with epidemics. Entitled “Using the Fantastic Reality Ability Measurement to cope with epidemics: a Turkish validity and reliability study,” Yasemin Özyer Güvener, Samet Dinçer and Enver Caner have explored the adaptability of the Fantastic Reality Ability Measurement (FRAME) into Turkish. This methodological study was conducted to use the Turkish version of the FRAME as a valid and reliable measurement tool. The study was conducted during 2021 in various provinces of Turkey using the online data collection method to establish language validity, construct validity and conduct reliability analysis. Analysis of data confirmed the reliability of using FRAME into Turkish context. Understanding challenges for collaborative disaster response and management remains an important research priority (Nohrstedt, 2016).

As we have noted in the earlier editorials, we are really proud for *IJES* to have been included in the Academic Journal Guide 2021 published by the Chartered Association of Business School (CABS) as a “two-star” journal and in the Journal Quality list published by the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) as a “C”-rated journal. We owe our gratitude to our authors, reviewers and readers including the wider emergency management community for this recognition in such a short period of time. We are, as always, grateful to our authors who publish in *IJES* and other scholars who cite our research.

We again renew our call for publishing with us or joining *IJES* as potential reviewers and/or on the editorial board.

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