

# PTSD

## Assessment and Management in the Community Setting

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Grand River Hospital - Day in Psychiatry

Robyn S. Fallen

PGY5 Psychiatry

McMaster University – Waterloo Regional Campus

November 2016

# Assessment and Management of PTSD in the Community Setting

Dr. Robyn Fallen

## Declaration of Conflict of Interest:

I DO NOT have any affiliation with any pharmaceutical, medical device or communication organization.

I INTEND to make therapeutic recommendations for medications that have not received regulatory approval ( e.g. “off-label” use).



# Assessment and Management of PTSD in the Community Setting

Dr. Robyn Fallen

This Day in Psychiatry educational event has received  
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Lundbeck

Otsuka

Pfizer

Janssen

Purdue

Shire

Sunovion

KW Guardian Pharmacy

HLS Therapeutics

# Assessment and Management of PTSD in the Community Setting

Dr. Robyn Fallen

Mitigating Potential Conflicts of Interest:  
Not applicable

I will specifically mention when my therapeutic  
recommendations have not received regulatory approval.



# Introduction

Psychiatry Resident (PGY 5)

- ❖ The Working Centre – St. John's Kitchen
  - ❖ Psychiatric Outreach Project
- ❖ Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre
- ❖ Assertive Community Treatment Team
  - ❖ South Wellington (Guelph)
  - ❖ Waterloo Regional Homes (Thresholds)
  - ❖ Grand River Hospital
- ❖ Specialized Mental Health
  - ❖ Seniors Team
  - ❖ Adult – Inpatient, COTT, Dual Diagnosis
- ❖ CAIP, Grand River Hospital
- ❖ Homewood - Trillium (Acute Crisis/Stabilization Unit)
- ❖ Basic Clinical Training Year

McMaster University, Class of 2012

- Waterloo Regional Campus



# Clinical Interests

- Severe and Persistent Mental Illness
- Marginalized / Vulnerable
  - Homeless / Street involved
  - New Canadians / refugees
  - Dual Diagnosis
    - Intellectual Disability and Mental Health concerns

... exposure to trauma is a common comorbidity



# Overview

1. Relevance
2. Prevention (?)
3. Diagnosis
  1. Tools for Primary Care
4. Evidence – Supported Treatment
  1. Psychoeducation
  2. Self – Management Strategies
  3. Pharmacotherapy
  4. Psychotherapy
5. Resources

# Reflection:

What percentage of individuals in your practice would have met criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD in their lifetime?



# In your practice...

$< 1 \%$

$1 - 5 \%$

$5 - 10 \%$

$10 - 15 \%$

$> 15 \%$

# Prevalence in Canada

- Lifetime prevalence estimate Canada: 9.2 %
  - Point prevalence approximately 2 %
- Canadians reporting exposure to a significantly traumatic event: > 76 %
- Onset often in mid – late 20s
  - Peak productivity years ... trajectory?
- Females 2 : 1 Males



In Canada, what is the most common form of trauma resulting in PTSD?

- a. Unexpected death of someone else
- b. Sexual assault
- c. Serious illness or injury to someone close
- d. Having a child with a serious illness
- e. Being beaten by a partner or caregiver
- f. All of the above
- g. None of the above

In Canada, what is the most common form of trauma resulting in PTSD?

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- f. All of the above
- g. None of the above



# Consequences

PTST is associated with significant:

- Reduced Quality of Life
- Functional Impairment
- Comorbidity
  - Chronic pain
  - Sleep problems
  - Sexual Dysfunction
  - Cognitive Dysfunction

Katzman et al. 2014

# Consequences

Risk of suicide attempts is increased 2 – 3 fold by PTSD

Katzman et al. 2014



# Consequences

- In primary care populations, PTSD associated with:
  - Longer hospitalizations
  - Greater use of mental health care

What proportion of patients with PTSD have another comorbid psychiatric disorder?

- a. 10 %
- b. 25 %
- c. 50 %
- d. 75 %
- e. 90%



What proportion of patients with PTSD have another comorbid psychiatric disorder?

- a. 10 %
- b. 25 %
- c. 50 %
- d. 75 %
- e. 90%

# Comorbidity

- Higher rates of:
  - Other anxiety disorders
  - Major Depressive Disorder
  - Oppositional Defiant Disorder
  - ADHD
  - Substance Use Disorder
    - Alcohol Dependence
  - Borderline Personality Disorder
    - Poorer quality of life
    - More comorbid psychiatric conditions
    - Higher lifetime rates of suicide attempts

Note: Comorbid panic disorder or mood disorder = higher degree of functional impairment than PTSD alone



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Case

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# Case

43 year old woman

Married, 2 kids

Works in sales

Generally healthy

No substance use

No past psychiatric history

Presents for cough

2 days ago woke in the night to smoke alarm

Fire in home – all family members evacuated safely



Are there strategies to reduce the risk of developing PTSD early after the exposure?



# First, Do No Harm

- Most don't develop PTSD!
  - Recall: 76 % of Canadians have a lifetime exposure to traumatic event
    - Only 9 % develop PTSD
- Population – based study following Norway terrorist attacks in 2011
  - 490 survivors followed
  - Only 11 % developed PTSD

Van Ameringen et al. 2008  
Dyb et al. 2014

# First, Do No Harm

## THE RISK OF HARM WITH CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING

- Some forms of early:
  - i. emotional processing/ventilation,
  - ii. encouraging recollection of working of the traumatic event
  - iii. normalization of emotional reaction to the event
- Cochrane review of 15 RCTs found high rates of conversion to PTSD for those receiving this intervention
  - Odds Ratio (OR),

Rose et al. 2002



# Why is debriefing harmful?

- Possible rationale:
  - Vividly recalling /describing details of event in a state of hyperarousal reinforces these neural pathways
  - (Strengthens the association between negative emotional state / physical hyperarousal and the memories of the event)

# Pharmacotherapy for prevention

Limited evidence to support use of pharmacotherapy for prevention of PTSD symptoms in the aftermath of a traumatic experience.



Katzman et al. 2014



# How to help after an incident



## PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

- Evidence-supported, promoted by WHO
  - Used by Red Cross internationally in disaster responses
- Neutral or reduces risk of conversion to PTSD
  - Awaiting larger trials
- First developed in the 1950s

*“A description of a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support”*

# Psychological First Aid: Approach



1. Active listening
  - Respect desire not to talk
2. Assess physical needs
3. Assess basic needs, ensure they are met
  - Shelter
  - Nutrition etc.
4. Promote positive coping mechanisms
5. Supportive advice, linking with sources of support
6. Encourage participation in normal daily routines
7. Identify those needing further help



# Applying Psychological First Aid

1. Active listening
  - Respect desire not to talk
2. Assess physical needs
3. Assess basic needs, ensure they are met
  - Shelter
  - Nutrition etc.
4. Promote positive coping mechanisms
5. Supportive advice, linking with sources of support
6. Encourage participation in normal daily routines
7. Identify those needing further help



# Applying Psychological First Aid

1. Active listening
2. Assess physical needs
  - Cough
3. Assess basic needs, ensure they are met
  - Kids, husband ok?
  - Shelter : Somewhere to stay?
  - Nutrition: Access to meals?
4. Promote positive coping mechanisms
5. Supportive advice, linking with sources of support
6. Encourage participation in normal daily routines
7. Identify those needing further help





# Risk / Prognostic Factors PRE-Trauma

- Temperamental
  - Childhood emotional problems
  - Prior mental disorders (panic, depression, OCD)
- Environmental
  - Lower SES, lower education
  - Prior exposure to trauma (especially in childhood)
  - Childhood adversity (economic, family dysfunction, parental separation/death)
  - Lower intelligence
  - Minority racial / ethnic status
  - Family psychiatric history
- Genetic / Physiologic
  - Female
  - Younger age at times of exposure (for adults)

Protective: Strong social support

# Risk / Prognostic Factors PERI-Trauma

- Environmental
  - Severity (dose) of trauma
  - Perceived life threat
  - Personal injury
  - Intentional
  - Interpersonal violence
    - Ex. perpetrated by caregiver or  
witnessed threat to caregiver (for kids)
- For military:
  - Being a perpetrator
  - Witnessing atrocities
  - Killing the enemy
- Dissociation during trauma / that persists



# Risk / Prognostic Factors POST-Trauma

- Temperamental
  - Negative appraisals
  - Maladaptive coping strategies
  - Development of acute stress disorder
- Environmental
  - Subsequent exposure to repeated upsetting reminders
  - Subsequent adverse life events
  - Financial or other trauma-related losses

Protective: Social support  
(for kids: family stability)

# Risk Assessment

- “Are any of these dangerous or life-threatening experiences still continuing in your life now?”
  - **Ex. Intimate partner violence**
    - Acknowledge the difficulty in seeking help when trauma hasn’t stopped
    - Determine if there is a mandatory reporting issue
      - Ex. Children at risk – Family and Children’s Services
    - Provide information about local resources
- Assess for risk of suicide



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# Case

43 year old woman

Returns 2 months later

- Appreciated your practical help the week of the incident
- Family is now in a rental unit while home is rebuilt
- Chief complaint: difficulty with sleep





# Does this woman have PTSD?

Broad differential diagnosis:

- Medical causes of insomnia
- Normal grief / bereavement
- Adjustment Disorder
- Mood Disorder (e.g. Major Depressive Disorder)
- Anxiety Disorder
- Acute Stress Disorder (3 days – 1 month post trauma)
- PTSD
- ...etc



# Does this woman have PTSD?

## SCREENING TOOLS FOR PRIMARY CARE

JAMA Rational Clinical Exam series recommends:

- Primary Care PTSD Screen (PC- PTSD)
- PTSD Checklist

Canadian PTSD Treatment Guidelines recommend:

- PTSD – MACSCREEN

Katzman et al. 2014

Spoont et al. 2015





# Does this woman have PTSD?

## Primary Care PTSD Screen (PC- PTSD)

- Available free online in PDF format
- Used by US Department of Veterans Affairs Primary Care Clinics

- 4 Items

- Positive Screen = 3 / 4

- Sensitivity 0.69

- Specificity 0.92

1. Have had nightmares about it or thought about it when you did not want to?
2. Tried hard not to think about it or went out of your way to avoid situations that reminded you of it?
3. Were constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?
4. Felt numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings?

If + ... further assessment

Katzman et al. 2014

Spoont et al. 2015



# Does this woman have PTSD?

## PTSD Checklist (PCL – C)

- Available free online in PDF format : Civilian version
- Also used by US Department of Veterans Affairs Primary Care Clinics
- Self-administered
- 17 Items
  - Likert scale 1-5
- Positive Screen =  $> 40$ 
  - Sensitivity 0.70
  - Specificity 0.90

If + ... further assessment

Katzman et al. 2014  
Spoont et al. 2015





# Does this woman have PTSD?

## MACSCREEN - PTSD

- Canadian tool
- Clinician or self-administered
- 2 Items
- Positive Screen = YES to both

If + ... further assessment

Have you experienced or seen a life-threatening or traumatic event such as a rape, accident, someone badly hurt or killed, assault, natural or man-made disaster, war, or torture?

If you answered “YES” then continue

Do you re-experience the event in disturbing (upsetting) ways such as dreams, intrusive memories, flashbacks, or physical reactions to situations that remind you of the event?

Katzman et al. 2014  
Spoont et al. 2015

# DSM 5 Criteria : PTSD

- A. Exposure to actual / threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence
  - Directly experienced
  - Witnessing in person
  - Learning a traumatic event occurred to close family
  - Experiencing repeated / extreme exposure to details  
ex. First responders
- B. Intrusion symptoms (1 or more)
  - Recurrent involuntary distressing memories
  - Recurrent distressing dreams / nightmares
  - Flashbacks (feel as if event re-occurring)
  - IN CHILDREN: trauma-reenactment may occur in play



# DSM 5 Criteria : PTSD

## C. Avoidance symptoms (1 or more)

- Efforts to avoid memories / thoughts / feelings about event
- Avoidance of external reminders of event

## D. Negative cognitions / mood (2 or more)

- Inability to remember important aspects of event
- Persistent negative beliefs about self / others / world
- Distorted cognitions about cause / consequences of event (self-blame)
- Persistent negative emotional state
- Diminished interest in activities
- Feeling detached / estranged from others
- Inability to experience positive emotions

# DSM 5 Criteria : PTSD

- E. Hyperarousal symptoms (2 or more)
  - Irritable behaviour, angry outbursts (verbal / physical)
  - Reckless or self-destructive behaviour
  - Hypervigilance
  - Exaggerated startle response
  - Problems with concentration
  - Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling / staying asleep)
- F. Duration is > 1 month
- G. Causes distress or impairment
- H. Not due to effects of a substance or medical condition





# Tools for Tracking Severity

<https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/educational-resources/assessment-measures>

Severity of Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms, Adult  
(National Stressful Events Survey PTSD Short Scale)  
[NSESS]

- Available free online as PDF to download
- 9 symptoms of PTSD
  - Rate each 0 (none at all ) to 4 (extremely)
- Can use to track treatment progress

# Case

43 year old woman

Positive screen

Meets DSM criteria for PTSD

How to approach treatment?





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# Treatment: Approach

- Empathic, validating, accepting stance
- Provide sense of safety and control
- Assess and address comorbidities
  - Depression
  - Substance Use, etc.
- Ongoing sources of trauma can complicate treatment
- Culturally- sensitive approach

Note: Use of translators



# Psychoeducation

“Normal response to an abnormal event”

- Fight / flight / freeze response is helpful / adaptive when we are in physical danger
- This response becomes a problem when the body tells us there is danger when there is no real danger
  - Some clients live with ongoing threats
  - Goal is to be able to feel a sense of safety in times / places it is safe

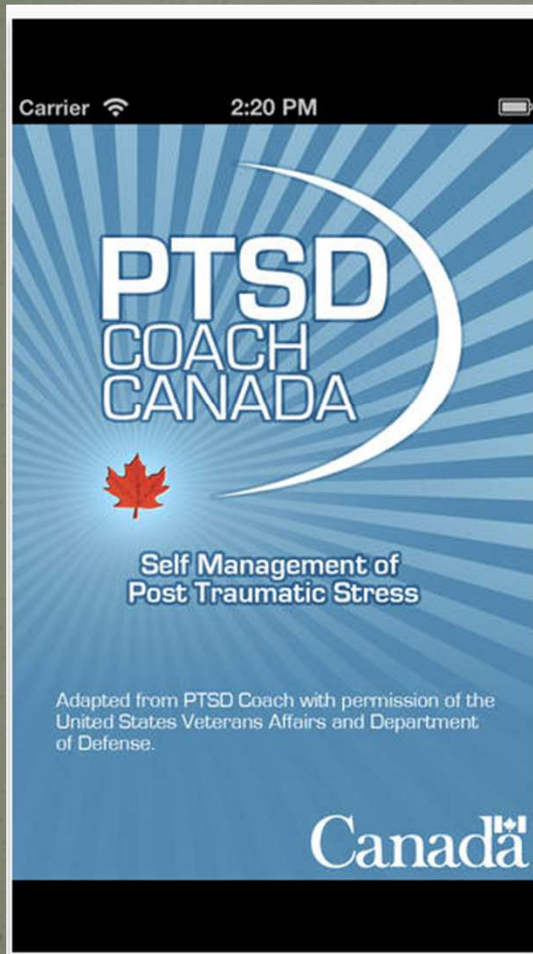


# Psychoeducation : Resources

- AnxietyBC ([www.anxietybc.com/adults/ptsd](http://www.anxietybc.com/adults/ptsd))
  - Print free handouts
    - Calm breathing
    - Grounding
    - Muscle relaxation etc...
- National Center for PTSD ([www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov))
- Books:
  - Life After Trauma – A Workbook for Healing



# Self- Management Strategies



- Free mobile app
- User – friendly
- Visual and audio
- Available in French
- Guided:
  - Deep breathing
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Have this on  
your device to  
show / teach!

# Self- Management Strategies



- Free mobile app
- User – friendly
- Text and audio
- Created by US VA
- Guided:
  - Mindful breathing
  - Mindful walking
  - Mindful eating ...

Useful beyond PTSD

- Anxiety
- Mood
- “Stress”



# Pharmacotherapy for PTSD

Note: Prescribing for PTSD is off-label

- Informed consent involves counseling about this
- Consider risk vs benefit

# Pharmacotherapy

Best evidence is for pharmacotherapy + psychotherapy !

Predictors of long-term treatment outcome in combat and peacekeeping veterans with military-related PTSD

- “Real world” study in outpatient treatment
- High rates of comorbid depression, alcohol use
- Intervention: psychoed+ medication + therapy
- Response rate 66 %
- Progressive improvement in PTSD symptoms over 2 years
  - ... encouraging patients to remain in long-term treatment important



# Pharmacotherapy approach

- Start with monotherapy of 1<sup>st</sup> line option
- If response to sufficient trial (4- 6 weeks) at optimized dose is inadequate or agent is not tolerated, then:
  - Switch to another 1<sup>st</sup> line agent (or 2<sup>nd</sup> line if required)
- If partial response obtained,
  - Add nightmare-specific treatment if needed (1<sup>st</sup> line)
  - Add augmentation agent (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> line)

Note: Attempt to preserve gains!



# Pharmacotherapy : PTSD

First Line	Fluoxetine Paroxetine * Sertraline Venlafaxine XR
Second Line	Fluvoxamine ** Mirtazapine

\* Side effects can limit tolerability.  
Withdrawal effects may be more severe vs other SSRIs

\*\* Caution : increased risk of drug-drug interactions. Inhibits several CYP 450 enzymes



# Relapse Prevention

- Long term therapy with SSRIs has been evaluated
  - In responders to SSRIs :
    - Highly significant reduction in relapse rates with continued SSRI use (vs switch to placebo) over 6 months
    - Odds ratio for relapse was 0.25
  - In RCT discontinuation studies:
    - Significantly lower relapse rates over 6 months with SSRI use
      - On SSRI 5 – 20 %
      - Placebo 20 – 50 %
  - Open follow up studies of SSRI use
    - Sustained and continued improvement over 6 – 12 months

# Pharmacotherapy - PTSD

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Alprazolam
- Citalopram
- Clonazepam
- Desipramine
- Doxepin
- Risperidone



# ADJUNCTIVE Pharmacotherapy



Second Line (Adjunct)	Eszopiclone Olanzapine * Risperidone *
Third Line (Adjunct)	Aripiprazole Clonidine Gabapentin Levetiracetam Pregabalin Quetiapine

\* Only if psychotic symptoms

# ADJUNCTIVE Pharmacotherapy

**DO NOT RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING AS ADJUNCTIVE:**

- Bupropion
- Guanfacine
- Topiramate
- Zolpidem





# Prazosin for trauma-related nightmares

## Prazosin

- An alpha-1 adrenergic blocker
  - Reduces noradrenergic hyperactivation
  - Blocking central noradrenergic receptors during sleep may reduce nightmares
- Level 1 Evidence
  - Reduces nightmares
  - Improves sleep quality
  - Decreases severity of PTSD symptoms (including daytime symptoms)



# Prazosin for trauma-related nightmares

- Health Canada approved to treat HYPERTENSION
- Notable risks:
  - Hypotension (especially orthostatic)
  - Dizziness
  - Lightheadedness
  - Headache
  - Fatigue
- To reduce risk of syncope:
  - Limit initial dose to 1 mg
  - Dose at bedtime
  - Counsel regarding orthostatic hypotention
  - Slow dose titration





# Psychotherapy

<b>First Line / Evidence Supported</b>	<p>Trauma-Focused CBT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Individual</li><li>- Group</li></ul> <p>EMDR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Evidence for faster recovery</li></ul> <p>-----</p> <p>Stress Management</p>	Superior & Equally Effective
<b>Less Effective / Limited evidence</b>	<p>Supportive Therapy</p> <p>Nondirective counseling</p> <p>Psychodynamic therapy</p> <p>Hypnotherapy</p>	



# Psychotherapy

## Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)

- Developed to reduce self-harm and other symptoms in individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder
  - Distress tolerance
  - Mindfulness
  - Emotion regulation
  - Interpersonal effectiveness
- Also useful in some individuals with PTSD
  - Reduces self-harm
  - May help individuals to become suitable candidates for PTSD-specific treatment





# Thinking about Psychotherapy for PTSD



FRACTURE



SURGERY



PHYSIOTHERAPY

PTSD



STABILIZATION → Trauma PSYCHOTHERAPY

- Self-regulation skills
- Addictions management

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# Local Resources

- Waterloo Trauma Service Initiative
  - Carizon Family & Community Services
  - Family & Children's Services
  - Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre
  - Sanguen Health Centre
  - Over 60 organizations throughout Waterloo Region
- Education and trauma-informed treatment
  - Non-profit centres
  - Private practitioners
- Grand River Hospital Adult Outpatient Psychiatry
  - Referral form available online



# Local Resources

- Distress lines
  - HERE 24/7 1-844-437-3247

Staffed 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

Emergency Shelter programs are welcoming, respectful and inclusive of diverse populations



## WOMEN FLEEING ABUSE

### Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region:

[www.wcswr.org](http://www.wcswr.org)

Eligibility: Women fleeing abuse who are at imminent risk ages 16 and older and their dependents (male dependents ages 18 or younger).

#### Anselma House

700 Heritage Drive, Kitchener

519-742-5894

Business Calls: 519-741-9184

#### Haven House

562 Concession Road, Cambridge

519-653-2422

Business Calls: 519-741-9184



## WOMEN

### YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo:

**YWCA Emergency Shelter Services**

84 Frederick St. E., Kitchener

519-744-0120 (Voice and TTY)

[www.ywcakw.on.ca](http://www.ywcakw.on.ca)

Eligibility: Females and trans ages 16 and older; families, including father-led families.

### Cambridge Shelter Corporation:

**The Cambridge Shelter**

26 Simcoe St., Cambridge

519-624-9305

[www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca](http://www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca)

Eligibility: Females ages 16 and older and families.



## MEN

### House of Friendship:

**Charles Street Men's Hostel**

63 Charles St. E., Kitchener

519-742-8327

[www.houseoffriendship.org](http://www.houseoffriendship.org)

Eligibility: Males ages 16 and older.

### Cambridge Shelter Corporation:

**The Cambridge Shelter**

26 Simcoe St., Cambridge

519-624-9305

[www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca](http://www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca)

Eligibility: Males ages 16 and older and families.





# Local Resources



## FAMILIES

**Eligibility:** Families with children under 18 years old, who are at-risk of housing loss or experiencing homelessness.

Lutherwood is the first point of contact for families to access emergency shelter. Lutherwood staff will support families to stay in their current housing or find new housing with the goal of reducing or avoiding emergency shelter stays. If a shelter stay is needed, Lutherwood staff facilitate access to emergency shelter.

### During Business Hours

Monday-Friday from

8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.:

(Phone or walk-in  
welcome)

### Lutherwood:

#### Families in Transition

41 Weber St. W., Kitchener **OR** 35 Dickson St., Cambridge

519-749-2450

519-623-9380

[www.lutherwood.ca](http://www.lutherwood.ca)

### After Business Hours

Contact these shelters  
directly.

### Cambridge Shelter Corporation:

#### The Cambridge Shelter

26 Simcoe St., Cambridge

519-624-9305

[www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca](http://www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca)

### YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo:

#### YWCA Emergency Shelter Services

84 Frederick St. E., Kitchener

519-744-0120 (Voice and TTY)

[www.ywcakw.on.ca](http://www.ywcakw.on.ca)

# Highlighted Resource

Katzman et al. *BMC Psychiatry* 2014, **14**(Suppl 1):S1  
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/14/S1/S1>



**REVIEW**

**Open Access**

## Canadian clinical practice guidelines for the management of anxiety, posttraumatic stress and obsessive-compulsive disorders

Martin A Katzman<sup>1\*</sup>, Pierre Bleau<sup>2</sup>, Pierre Blier<sup>3</sup>, Pratap Chokka<sup>4</sup>, Kevin Kjernisted<sup>5</sup>, Michael Van Ameringen<sup>6</sup>, the Canadian Anxiety Guidelines Initiative Group on behalf of the Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada/ Association Canadienne des troubles anxieux and McGill University



# Highlighted Resource

[www.macpsychhandbook.ca](http://www.macpsychhandbook.ca)

## McMaster Psychiatry Handbook App



Download on the  
**App Store**



GET IT ON  
**Google play**



### Practical Content

- High yield topics
- Evidence-supported



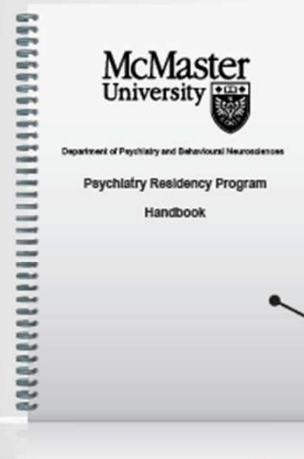
### New Tools

- BMI calculator
- AIMS tool



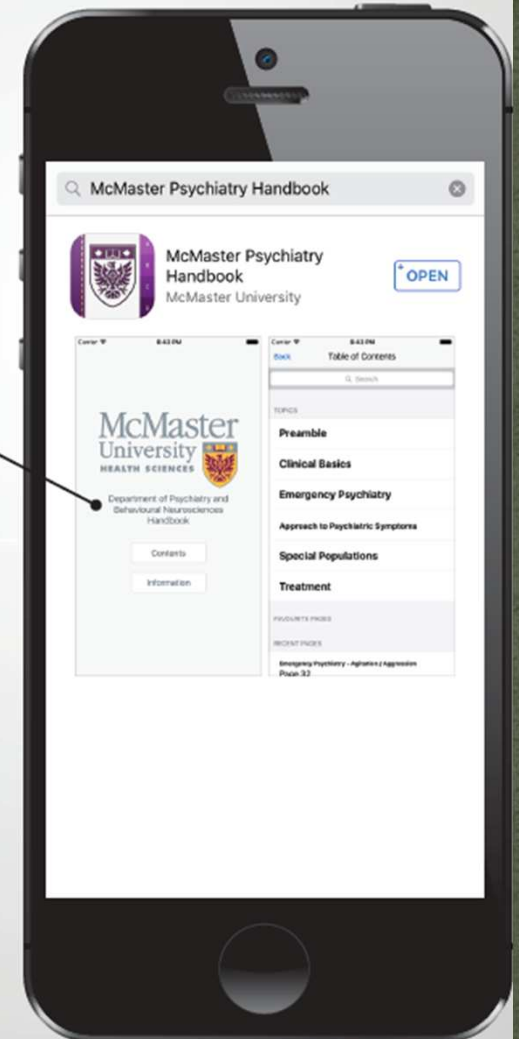
### User-Friendly

- Intuitive search
- Bookmarks
- Adjust font size



### Ideal for...

- Physicians
- Residents
- Medical Students
- Nurses
- Social Workers
- OT
- Mental Health Workers



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<http://communityservices.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/communityprogramssupports/domiciliaryemergencyshelters.asp>