

CADTH Reference List

Pharmacological and Psychological Interventions for Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder in Correctional Settings

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Key Messages

- We did not find any evidence-based guidelines regarding the use of pharmacological and psychological interventions for the treatment of adults with post-traumatic stress disorder in correctional settings.
- We identified other references on this topic that may be of interest; these are listed in the appendix.

Research Question

What are the evidence-based guidelines regarding the use of pharmacological and psychological interventions for the treatment of adults with post-traumatic stress disorder in correctional settings?

Methods

Literature Search Methods

A limited literature search was conducted by an information specialist on key resources including MEDLINE, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, the International HTA Database, the websites of Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused internet search. The search strategy comprised both controlled vocabulary, such as the National Library of Medicine's MeSH (Medical Subject Headings), and keywords. The main search concepts were PTSD and correctional settings. CADTH-developed search filters were applied to limit retrieval to guidelines. Where possible, retrieval was limited to humans. The search was completed on January 31, 2023, and limited to English-language documents published since January 1, 2018. Internet links were provided, where available.

Selection Criteria

One reviewer screened literature search results (titles and abstracts) and selected publications according to the inclusion criteria presented in [Table 1](#). Full texts of study publications were not reviewed. Open access full-text versions of evidence-based guidelines were reviewed when available.

Table 1: Selection Criteria

Criteria	Description
Population	Adults with post-traumatic stress disorder in correctional settings
Intervention	Pharmacological (e.g., antidepressants, ketamine, clonidine) and psychological (e.g., cognitive behavioural therapy, narrative exposure therapy) interventions
Comparator	Not applicable

Criteria	Description
Outcomes	Recommendations regarding best practices (e.g., appropriate patient populations, guidance as to which therapies should be used [e.g., as first- or second-line treatments], treatment protocols [e.g., dosing and frequency], recommended safeguards, strategies to mitigate harms, adverse events, and misuse)
Study designs	Evidence-based guidelines

Results

No relevant evidence-based guidelines were identified regarding the use of pharmacological and psychological interventions for the treatment of adults with post-traumatic stress disorder in correctional settings.

References of potential interest that did not meet the inclusion criteria are provided in [Appendix 1](#).

References

Guidelines and Recommendations

No literature identified.

Appendix 1: References of Potential Interest

Previous CADTH Reports

Nabilone for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder: A review of clinical effectiveness and guidelines. (CADTH Rapid response report: summary with critical appraisal). Ottawa (ON): CADTH; 2019: <https://www.cadth.ca/nabilone-treatment-post-traumatic-stress-disorder-review-clinical-effectiveness-and-guidelines>. Accessed 2023 Feb 2.

Note: a 2023 update is in progress. See: <https://www.cadth.ca/nabilone-treatment-post-traumatic-stress-disorder-2023-update>

Trauma-informed care for adults involved in the correctional system: A review of the clinical effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and guidelines. (CADTH Rapid response report: summary with critical appraisal). Ottawa (ON): CADTH; 2018: <https://www.cadth.ca/trauma-informed-care-adults-involved-correctional-system-review-clinical-effectiveness-cost>. Accessed 2023 Feb 2.

Systematic Reviews

Mixed Population

Givens A, Moeller K, Johnson TL. Prison-based interventions for early adults with mental health needs: A systematic review. *Int J Offender Ther Comp Criminol*. 2021;65(5):613-630. [PubMed](#)

Perdacher E, Kavanagh D, Sheffield J. Well-being and mental health interventions for Indigenous people in prison: Systematic review. *BJPsych Open*. 2019;5(6):e95. [PubMed](#)

Alternative Population- Adults not in Correctional Settings

Martin A, Naunton M, Kosari S, Peterson G, Thomas J, Christenson JK. Treatment guidelines for PTSD: A systematic review. *J Clin Med*. 2021;10(18):15. [PubMed](#)

Randomized Controlled Trials

Felton JW, Hailemariam M, Richie F, et al. Preliminary efficacy and mediators of interpersonal psychotherapy for reducing posttraumatic stress symptoms in an incarcerated population. *Psychother Res*. 2020;30(2):239-250. [PubMed](#)

Non-Randomized Studies

Macfarlane C, Masthoff E, Hakvoort L. Short-term music therapy attention and arousal regulation treatment (SMAART) for prisoners with posttraumatic stress disorder: A feasibility study. *J Forensic Psychol Res Pract*. 2019;19(5):376-92. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/24732850.2019.1670023>. Accessed 2023 Feb 2.

Guidelines and Recommendations

Correctional Setting Not Specified

Phelps AJ, Lethbridge R, Brennan S, et al. Australian guidelines for the prevention and treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder: Updates in the third edition. *Aust N Z J Psychiatry*. 2022;56(3):230-247. [PubMed](#)

Guideline Development Panel for the Treatment of PTSD in Adults, American Psychological Association. Summary of the clinical practice guideline for the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in adults. *Am Psychol*. 2019;74(5):596-607. [PubMed](#)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Post-traumatic stress disorder. (NICE guideline NG116). 2018; <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng116>. Accessed 2023 Feb 2.

Refer to Treatment for Adults- pages 20-22; Drug Treatment for Adults (pages 23-24)

Note: Target users of the guideline includes professionals who work in the criminal justice system.

VA/DOD clinical practice guideline for the management of posttraumatic stress disorder and acute stress disorder: Clinician summary. *Focus (Am Psychiatr Publ)*. 2018;16(4):430-448. [PubMed](#)

Refer to Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, (pages 44-72); Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder with Co-occurring Conditions (pages 72-75).

Review Articles

Public Safety Canada. Approaches to addressing serious mental illness in the Canadian criminal justice system. 2023; <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2023-r001/index-en.aspx>. Accessed 2023 Feb 2.

Javier RA, Owen EA, Maddux JA, eds. Assessing trauma in forensic contexts. Springer Nature; 2020: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-33106-1>. Accessed 2023 Feb 2.

Refer to Incarceration and Trauma: A Challenge for the Mental Health Care Delivery System.

Church D, Stapleton P, Mollon P, et al. Guidelines for the treatment of PTSD using clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques). *Healthcare (Basel)*. 2018;6(4):12. [PubMed](#)

Practice Resource

American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law. AAPL practice resource for prescribing in corrections. *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law*. 2018;46(2 Supplement):S2-S50. [PubMed](#)

Refer to Section 5.6- Trauma and Stressor-Related Disorders (pages S21-23)

Additional References

Editorial

Crole-Rees C, Forrester A. Developing a clinical pathway for traumatic stress in prisons. *Med Sci Law*. 2022;62(1):4-7. [PubMed](#)

Qualitative Study

Petrillo M. 'We've all got a big story': Experiences of a trauma-informed intervention in prison. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*. 2021;60(2):232-250. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/hojo.12408>. Accessed 2023 Feb 2.