Road Trauma Support WA: Using a Public Health Approach to reduce the long term effects of road trauma

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Abstract

Injury Matters provides Road Trauma Support WA (RTS WA), a state-wide service assisting anyone affected by road trauma, regardless of when the incident occurred, or the person's level of involvement. The purpose of this project is to share evaluation findings of applying a public health approach to RTS WA and to inform the service to meet the need of people impacted by road trauma. In 2018, a comprehensive evaluation framework was developed and implemented to show the impact of the service. The annual survey findings indicated 78.73% (n=37) of counselling clients incorporated topics that were discussed into their everyday life. Whilst service users have engaged with RTS WA for a specified road incident, the service often identifies complexities and underlying mental health concerns. This is addressed through a public health approach to support prevention strategies, as well as intervention strategies for those impacted by road trauma.

Background

In 2018, 161 people died on WA roads, with the impact of a crash felt long after the scene is cleared and the ripple effect impacting on people in different ways (Craig et al., 2016; Road Safety Commission WA, 2018). To support those impacted by road trauma, Injury Matters provides Road Trauma Support WA (RTS WA), a state-wide service assisting anyone affected by road trauma, regardless of when the incident occurred, or the person's level of involvement.

The RTS WA service utilises a public health approach for supporting clients with recovery and preventative strategies for optimal health and wellbeing. Since November 2013, RTS WA has provided information, support, training, and specialised trauma and bereavement counselling to reduce ongoing psychological and social distress of people affected by road trauma.

Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project is to share evaluation findings of applying a public health approach to RTS WA and how it informs the service to best meet the need of people impacted by road trauma.

Project Methods

In 2018, Injury Matters developed and implemented a comprehensive evaluation framework to show the impact of the service. Ongoing process data collection included number of counselling sessions and contacts, client wellbeing (MyOutcomes software), workshop attendance, enquiries, referrals, and resource access.

An annual survey was developed and implemented with people that engaged in the service through enquiries, workshops and presentations, counselling sessions and resources. The survey tool included questions relating to the following domains; engagement, knowledge, satisfaction and behaviour change. Results were analysed and reported as frequencies using *jamovi* (Version 0.9) data analysis software. Open-ended responses were analysed and reported through themes.

Evaluation

Since its establishment in 2013, RTS WA has provided specialised counselling to 1,159 individuals, delivered 2,530 counselling contacts, responded to over 1,000 requests for information and resources from individuals and organisations. The MyOutcomes data highlighted dual-complexities with other psychological issues.

Annual survey evaluation findings (n = 61) who engaged with RTS WA activities indicated 83% (n=51) of respondents contacted RTS WA following a road traffic incident; 63% reached out within 12 weeks of their road incident; and 78.73% (n=37) incorporated topics that were discussed in the counselling session into their everyday life. Qualitative feedback showed the need for follow-up consultations, possibility to target other industries including schools and regional areas, and appreciation for the creation of a safe space to grieve.

Conclusions

The evaluation of RTS WA has shown areas of success and informed future work, including the need for varying levels of support for clients. Whilst service users have engaged with RTS WA for a specified road incident, the service often identifies complexities and underlying mental health concerns. This is addressed through a public health approach to support those impacted, as well as identify areas for prevention. RTS WA provides support strategies to reduce ongoing psychological and social distress of people affected by road trauma. This contributes to improved wellbeing and quality of life and reduced impact on health resources from adverse psychosocial outcomes, including hospitalisation.

References

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