

INVISIBLE WOUNDS

CLINICAL PRACTICE TIPS WHEN CARING FOR PATIENTS IMPACTED BY MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA



As a health care provider, you may care for Canadian Armed Forces Veterans. They can carry invisible wounds, including those related to military sexual trauma (MST). MST can shape their health care experience, whether that's feeling safe during medical procedures, how they relate to you, or how much they are willing to share.

Screen for MST as part of your clinical interview and use these tips to provide tailored, sensitive and effective care.



ADAPT YOUR PROCEDURES

Certain health procedures can recreate sensations from the traumatic event(s).

- Explain processes and rationales.
- Offer to provide a running commentary of your actions.
- Monitor for signs of distress.



BE TRAUMA-INFORMED

A Veteran's coping and trauma responses may manifest in unclear or strong behaviours.

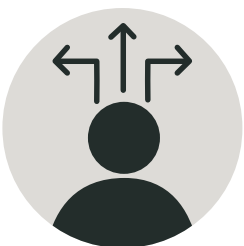
- Build your understanding of common trauma and coping responses.
- Provide calm, validating and supportive responses.



BUILD TRUST

Patient-provider relationships can be complicated for Veterans impacted by MST.

- Explain confidentiality and address privacy concerns before asking questions.
- Acknowledge the Veteran as the expert in their own experience and avoid making assumptions.
- Acknowledge any missteps you may make and apologize.



PROMOTE PERSONAL CHOICE

Veterans may be less accustomed to being active participants in their care.

- Share the full range of treatment options, including risks and benefits.
- Remind Veterans they have choices and the final say in treatments and providers.



USE A DIVERSITY LENS

MST impacts Veterans differently based on background and identity factors.

- Ask about intersecting factors related to identity, background and MST experience.
- Consider implications for care and adapt accordingly.



FACILITATE INTEGRATED AND HOLISTIC CARE

Trauma can impact many areas of a Veteran's life.

- Take a biopsychosocial-spiritual perspective of care.
- Educate Veterans about how physical and mental health are interconnected.
- Collaborate interprofessionally, with patient consent.

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INTRODUCTION

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