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LATEST PUBLICATIONS

Welcome to *Research Compass*, the Atlas Institute's newsletter highlighting new developments in Veteran and Family well-being and mental health research. In each issue, you'll find updates on studies in which you can participate, opportunities to get involved as a research advisor, and links to our latest publications.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

NEW RESEARCH PUBLISHED AND PRESENTED

Minority stress

New research has recently been published from the minority stress project led by Atlas Institute researchers. During The Royal's Pride Week Grand Rounds, Dr. Andrew Nicholson, Vice-President of Research at the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families, presented a novel research framework that rethinks minority stress (i.e. discrimination, marginalization and stigma) as a morally injurious event. Minority stress can be morally injurious, as identity-related rejection can foster feelings of betrayal and lead sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) to view their identity as a moral violation. This new research has now been published in the *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, with an article authored by the Atlas Clinical Research team on one of the first mixed-methods studies to investigate the morally injurious dimensions of minority stress in SGMs (bit.ly/identity-in-turmoil-publication). Key findings identified four themes of minority stress-related moral injury: shame, guilt, betrayal/loss of trust and attachment injuries, with attachment injuries emerging as a unique feature of moral injury in SGMs. These research findings were also shared by Victoria Klimkowski, Research Coordinator at Atlas, in a poster presentation at the Society for Psychotherapy Research's International



Conference in Poland. In addition, Dr. Nicholson presented on the relationship between the brain, body, suicidality and mental distress in SGMs at the Society of Biological Psychiatry (SOBP) International Conference.

The progress made in the minority stress program of research represents advancement in understanding of the unique social and mental health-related challenges that minority groups must face. The insights from this research offer key implications for military members, Veterans and their Families, who represent a minority group within society, with minoritized subgroups existing as well within the military community.



Neurofeedback

Atlas Institute researchers presented on ongoing neurofeedback studies at several events recently. Jonathan Lieberman, PhD student, presented at the SOBP conference on the optimal areas of the brain to target with neurofeedback to treat symptoms related to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This study protocol on amygdala and posterior cingulate cortex-targeted neurofeedback therapy to

address PTSD was also recently published in *BMC Psychiatry* (bit.ly/pcc-amygdala-neurofeedback-protocol-publication).

At the 2025 CIMVHR Ottawa Engagement Session, master's student SueEllen MacGowan gave an oral presentation to a broad audience of military community members and health care professionals on findings demonstrating restored brain connections after 20 sessions of neurofeedback therapy, which can help reduce PTSD symptoms.

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY

NEW STUDY

Moral injury study launched by the University of Alberta

Moral injury in Veteran Families refers to the emotional and psychological distress experienced by loved ones who are deeply affected by the traumatic or morally injurious experiences of a Veteran. While moral injury is commonly associated with the Veterans themselves, it can extend to their Family members, including spouses, children and close companions. These individuals may struggle with their own feelings of betrayal, confusion or conflict as they witness their loved ones' internal struggles with actions or events that clash with their personal morals, ethics or values. The impact of moral injury can cause fractures in relationships, create feelings of isolation and lead to a lack of trust in others or in humanity.

As researchers in Canada explore the broader effects of moral injury, understanding how it affects Families is crucial for developing the right support systems and interventions to help them heal and cope with these unique challenges. If you're a Family member of a Canadian Veteran and have ever questioned what's right or struggled with a sense of trust in humanity, your experience may hold valuable insights. Researchers at the University of Alberta would love to hear your story and learn about the kinds of support or interventions that could make a difference for you or your loved ones.

➔ For more information about this Canadian study on moral injury in Veteran Families, please contact Dr. Lorraine Smith-MacDonald: himarcr6@ualberta.ca



New research funding opportunities now available

We've launched new research funding opportunities in three critical areas designed to enhance understanding and support the mental health and well-being of Veterans and their Families. This initiative aligns with our continuing commitment to expanding knowledge and boosting research capabilities in the field of mental health, working directly with the community to identify areas of particular interest and opportunity.

This year, Atlas will be funding research on:

- Caregiving, intimacy, and relational health in Veteran Families
- Veteran resilience after service and rebuilding identity (in partnership with Mental Health Research Canada)
- Occupational moral injury implications post-service for RCMP members

Proposals will be accepted until October 14, 2025 at 12 p.m., Eastern time, with the anticipated notice of decision in December 2025 to January 2026.

LEARN MORE AND APPLY

atlasveterans.ca/research-funding-opportunities

CONTACT THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS TEAM

atlasresearch@theroyal.ca



Build your research skills with the Veteran and Family research training program

The Veteran and Family research training program is being offered for a second year, with new options for learning. This online training program is specifically designed to enhance research knowledge and skills among Veterans and Family members.

This year's training offers two options to suit different learning needs: a structured, module-based nine-week course, as well as a four-part workshop series exploring the fundamentals of research. The workshop series is ideal for those looking for a lighter or more flexible way to engage with core concepts, while the course offers a more in-depth, sequential learning experience.

LEARN MORE AND COMPLETE THE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

atlasveterans.ca/research-training-program-2025

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS? EMAIL:

researchtraining.atlas@theroyal.ca



NEW
INTERNATIONAL
STUDY
LAUNCHING
THIS FALL

WOMEN VETERANS' REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Military service can have unique and lasting effects on women's health — including reproductive health. The Atlas Institute and the Centre for Military Women's Research at Anglia Ruskin University (centreformilitarywomensresearch.com) are launching a new international study that will explore and compare the reproductive health experiences of women Veterans from Canada and the United Kingdom.

The study is seeking women Veterans living in Canada or the U.K. to take part in a one-time survey, which will cover topics such as fertility, menopause, sexual health, pelvic health, and well-being. Participant insights will help build stronger evidence and inform services and supports for women Veterans across allied nations.

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST
TO BE NOTIFIED WHEN
THE STUDY LAUNCHES

atlasveterans.ca/mailing-list

EMAIL

atlasresearch@theroyal.ca

Kate Hill MacEachern: Reflections on attending the Centre for Military Women's Research Conference

Attending and presenting at conferences is one of the ways that researchers share knowledge. One of my favourite conferences to attend has been the one hosted by the Centre for Military Women's Research (CMWR) in Cambridge, U.K. (centreformilitarywomensresearch.com/cmwr-conference-2025) which brings together people from across different disciplines and industries, including serving women and Veterans, to discuss the issues facing military women. What makes this such an enjoyable event is the passion and enthusiasm participants bring. There are difficult conversations and challenging questions, but with that comes progress, hope and excitement for creating change.

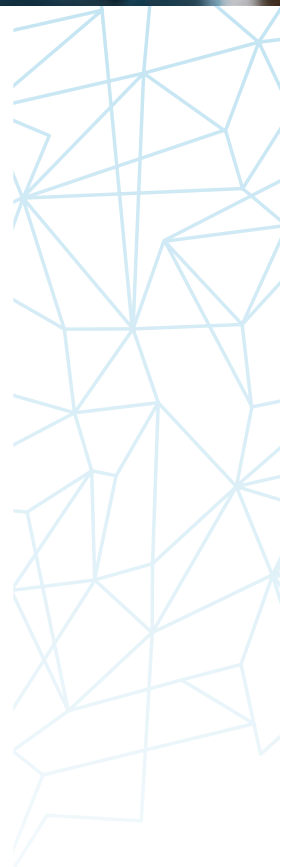
I first attended in December 2023 and made many great connections, one of which led to our collaboration with Anglia Ruskin University and the women's reproductive health study **spotlighted in this issue** that is launching soon. This past April, I had the opportunity to present on preliminary results from the first study launched as part of the Athena Project (atlasveterans.ca/athena-project) and I was also invited to co-facilitate a workshop. The presentation discussed rates in the sample of mental health diagnoses, chronic pain and associations between harassment and discrimination, institutional betrayal, moral injury and PTSD. This sparked some important conversations with the audience and fellow presenters about support and programs for women Veterans. The workshop began with a presentation on sex and gender in research, which led to a really great discussion on identity and how different factors intersect to shape women's experiences. Colleagues with lived expertise continued the workshop by talking



about community engagement in research. Workshop participants were actively engaged, highlighting a clear desire to understand how lived expertise can be incorporated into research and an acknowledgement of the value that is brought to research projects, and it made for an amazing learning experience.

Conferences that make themselves accessible and welcoming to diverse perspectives and encourage participation and collaboration are the ones that I find the most valuable. If you happen to find yourself in Cambridge at the same time as CMWR Conference in 2026, consider attending!

— **Kate Hill MacEachern, PhD**
*Senior Research Associate, Applied Research,
 Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families*



Recruiting studies

Interested in participating in research? Research participation helps expand our understanding of Veteran and Family mental health and well-being and can support the improvement of treatments, programs and services. The Atlas Institute leads and supports research projects – new opportunities to participate open up regularly. Check out a few of the studies currently looking for participants.

LED BY ATLAS

- Exploring the association between unmet health and well-being needs and mental health for women Veterans
- Thriving after service: The prevalence and predictors of flourishing among military and RCMP Veterans
- An exploratory study into the sleep health of Canadian Veterans and their Families

→ To find out if you're eligible to participate, please visit: atlasveterans.ca/get-involved

- Self-regulation of brain activity using multiple sessions of real-time fMRI neurofeedback to reduce PTSD symptoms

→ To register for the study, please visit: bit.ly/mri-biofeedback-study-ptsd-form

Questions? Please contact:

✉ Jill.Horning@theroyal.ca

- The neural correlates of minority stress: Uncovering systemic oppression related to the intersectionality of identity with neuroimaging and machine learning

→ To find out if you're eligible to participate, please visit: redcap.link/minoritystresscontact

SUPPORTED BY ATLAS

→ [Studying the effectiveness and implementation of Sudarshan Kriya Yoga for Canadian Veterans with PTSD](#)

→ [Brain measures linked to hyperarousal in PTSD using MRI imaging](#)

LEARN MORE ABOUT
RECRUITING RESEARCH PROJECTS

atlasveterans.ca/recruiting-studies

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

The Atlas Institute recognizes the importance of including different experiences and perspectives in our various projects. We believe the voices of our lived experience community are vitally important to the work we do and invite you to participate in our projects, including research projects, through surveys, panels, webinars and town hall events and more.

SEE OUR CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

atlasveterans.ca/get-involved

Note: Bolded names indicate Atlas Institute researchers and staff.

mental health

Longitudinal analysis of adjustment to civilian life and self-rated mental health using the Life after Service Survey

2025-08-12

MacEachern KH, Gregory A, Rodrigues S

Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health

moral injury

Identity in turmoil: Investigating the morally injurious dimensions of minority stress

2025-06-19

Nicholson AA, Narikuzhy S, Wolf J, Pichtikova M, Siegel M, Mirabelli J, Hatchard T, Hosseini-Kamkar N, Bawagan E, Roth SL, Mutschler C, Lanius RA, **Hosseiny F**, Eckstrand K, Lueger-Schuster B

European Journal of Psychotraumatology

posttraumatic stress disorder

mental health

brain imaging

Study protocol for a multi-session randomized sham-controlled trial of PCC-and amygdala-targeted neurofeedback for the treatment of PTSD

2025-06-15

Lieberman JM, Lanius RA, Th  berge J, Frey BN, Frewen PA, Scharnowski F, Steyrl D, Ros T, Densmore M, Tassinari E, Matic V, Hosseini-Kamkar N, Narikuzhy S, **Hosseiny F**, Jetly R, **Nicholson AA**

BMC Psychiatry

posttraumatic stress disorder

mental health

Toward a definition of treatment-resistant posttraumatic stress disorder: a systematic review

2025-06-09

Al-Shamali HF, Meshkat S, Janssen-Aguilar R, Uthayakumar H, Burback L, Winkler O, Zhang Y, Greenshaw A, Enns MW, **Nicholson AA**, Frewen P, Sareen J, Vermetten E, Jetly R, Bhat V

Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health

posttraumatic stress disorder

mental health

Treating posttraumatic stress disorder in military populations: A meta-analysis

2025-03-24

Liu JJW, Nazarov A, Ein N, Easterbrook B, Le T, Baker C, Gervasio J, Auger A, Balderson K, Bilodeau M, Burhan AM, Enns MW, **Hosseiny F**, Lavoie V, Mota N, Roth ML, Wanklyn SG, **Richardson JD**

Journal of Clinical Psychiatry

TO READ THESE PUBLICATIONS

atlasveterans.ca/publications



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