

Confidence of Kent Police special constabulary in first aid: A survey study

Dr E.Mellor¹, Dr K.Couper²
1: Kent Police; Warwick Medical School.
2: Warwick Medical School; Critical Care Unit, University
Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust.

BACKGROUND

- In pre-hospital medicine there is a delay between the time of the incident and professional medical response.
- All UK police officers receive basic first aid training and are often the first to arrive to incidents where there may be a casualty, leaving officers in a position to act as a first responder.
- It is a police officer's primary duty to preserve life and limb, thus providing first aid will take precedence if arriving first on scene.
- Survival rates are improved for out of hospital cardiac arrests when early first aid is given by police officers as quality BLS is given quickly (1).
- Most preventable pre-hospital deaths occur as a result of airway compromise, uncontrolled haemorrhage, or respiratory failure (2). These are all manageable with basic first aid.

AIM

This study aimed to address the question of the confidence of Kent Police special constabulary in first aid. Establishing quantitatively how confident officers feel in using the equipment given to them and responding to a range of incidents where first aid may be given.

METHOD

- An online questionnaire was used to measure self-reported confidence in first aid abilities using a five point Likert type scale.
- The questionnaire was sent to the whole target population of 290 special constables in Kent Police.
- Comparisons were made between groups based on division of officers, level of first aid training and whether the officers had staffed the Joint Response Unit.

Confidence in different response situations

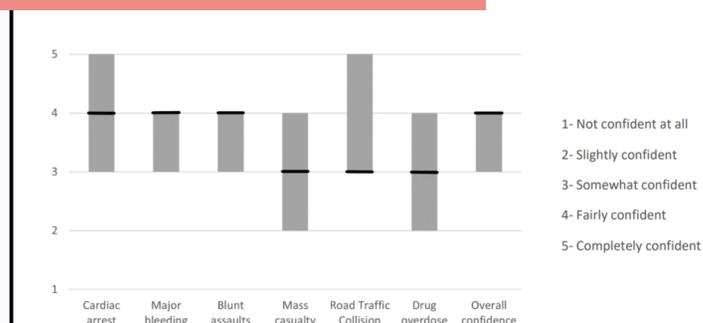


Figure 1: Graph showing the median confidence and inter-quartile ranges of respondents for different response situations.

RESULTS

- The response rate to the survey was 28%, with 83 responses.
- 60% of officers have used first aid whilst on duty.
- The highest levels of confidence were reported in cardiac arrest (median 4, IQR 3-5), but 28% of respondents reported a confidence of three or less.
- Lowest confidence was reported in drug overdoses and mass casualty (both reported as median 3, IQR 2-4).
- Being single crewed and training frequency were the factors which appear to have the largest negative effect on confidence.
- Results of comparisons by first aid training level suggest that receiving more advanced first aid training increases confidence and decreases the negative effects of a variety of factors (overall confidence median 3, IQR 3-4 for standard level of first aid versus median 4, IQR 4-5 for higher levels).

Implications for practice

- The Kerslake report on the Manchester arena bombing in 2017 reported on the interoperability between the ambulance and police services (4). The panel stated that the initial police response "probably reveals something of a lack of confidence expressed by those police officers in their own first aid capabilities." (4, p146).
- The results of this questionnaire suggest that confidence in a mass casualty is amongst the lowest of the scenarios that were assessed.
- This is something that should be monitored within Kent Police, with an aim to improve knowledge and confidence in this area.

Factors negatively affecting confidence

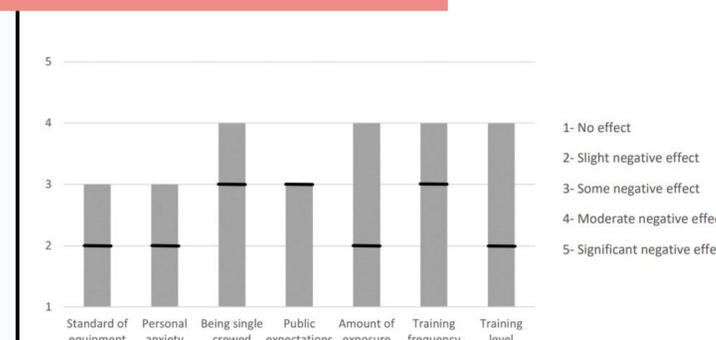


Figure 2: Graph showing the median confidence and inter-quartile ranges of respondents for factors negatively affecting confidence.

CONCLUSION

- Confidence in responding to mass casualty events were rated as amongst the lowest of the scenarios given to officers.
- Results suggest that many officers want increased training input around first aid and that this could increase their confidence in their abilities.

Kent Police Special constabulary

Special constables are police officers working solely on a voluntary basis, but with full police powers and uniform. Officers have an initial day of first aid training, then a day annually as part of the two-day officer safety training. Kent Police and the local ambulance service request assistance from one another around 15,000 times per year (3). As a result, the Joint Response Unit (JRU) was created which is crewed by a paramedic and two police officers. The JRU attend jobs where both services are likely to be needed, in addition to attending priority calls for each service. Every police car in Kent also carries an emergency trauma pack (ETP), containing tourniquets, chest seal, haemostatic dressing and a trauma dressing.

References:

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