



Concussion Recovery for Intimate Partner Violence Survivors

Dr. Alyssa Ferns, Diana McGlinchey

Victimology Research Centre, Algonquin College, Ottawa, Canada

Abstract

The current project aims to address a critical gap in healthcare services for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) who have experienced concussion (i.e., mild traumatic brain injury, mTBI). In Canada, over 100,000 women face IPV annually, often resulting in injuries to the head, face, and neck. Research indicates that many survivors of IPV may suffer from mTBI due to head impacts or strangulation, yet these injuries often go undetected and untreated. Concussion is often referred to as an invisible injury because symptoms may not be immediately apparent, leading survivors to forego medical help. Compounded by the challenges of fleeing violence and navigating complex systems (e.g., securing safe housing, education access for children, engaging with the criminal justice system), survivors may struggle to access appropriate care. This project seeks to bridge this gap by partnering with Muse, a Toronto-based neurotechnology company that works with clients to provide real-time biofeedback to help improve focus, reduce stress, and enhance calm and self-awareness. This study uses a repeated-measures method to have participants complete a comprehensive wellness survey including the opportunity to discuss their experience of violence/injury. Participants then receive online concussion recovery package of educational materials and a subscription to use the Muse meditation and wellness App. After approximately 6 weeks, participants complete a post-survey. Data collection is currently on-going and this project has been approved by our Research Ethics Board and is funded by the Canadian Institute of Health Research. This project will help inform law enforcement and victim service providers about the specific physical and psychological symptoms of concussion experienced by IPV survivors, survivors' path to wellness, and offer other trauma and violence-informed care approaches.

Keywords: intimate partner violence; concussion; mild traumatic brain injury; resiliency; wellness mediation