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**Symposia Abstract Submission**

**Title:** Advancing Trauma Recovery in Private Psychiatric Hospitals: Integrating Evidence-Based Care through Learning Care Systems

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**Insert abstract below (150 – 200 words for each author).** Note –no subheadings are required for abstracts, but please ensure you address the Aims, Method, Results and Discussion of your study/s

**Symposia Abstract**

Since the decommissioning of the repatriation hospitals in the 1980s, the private hospital sector has become a leading provider of acute and programmatic mental health care to veterans and, more recently, first responders with psychological injuries. Toowong and Richmond Hospitals are two of the foremost providers of these services in Australia. Both hospitals run accredited Trauma Recovery Programs (TRPs) for PTSD, overseen by the DVA and monitored nationally to ensure alignment with evidence-based treatment. National monitoring of the TRPs indicates that while the majority of participants experience symptom reduction, over two-thirds remain highly symptomatic by the end of treatment. This symposium outlines how each hospital has developed and run the TRP program and the attempts made to address specific areas of mental health impairment to improve recovery outcomes for injured veterans and first responders.

The first presentation will outline the Toowong Private Hospital Trauma Recovery Program's Day Patient model, emphasizing its structured, supportive care framework. The second talk will delve into the evaluation and optimization of the traumatic stress injury care process established at Richmond Hospital, highlighting the transition from evidence-based treatment to a holistic evidence-based care approach. The third presentation will examine the complex relationship between guilt, mental illness, and suicide attempts among Australian veterans with PTSD. The fourth presentation will discuss how physical activity programs have been integrated into inpatient and outpatient programs and the impact of this on common physical health outcomes typically seen in PTSD.

**Abstract Author 1:**

Dr Andrew Khoo

**Title:** The Toowong Private Hospital Trauma Recovery Program Day patient model of care (Andrew Khoo)

**Abstract:** The Toowong Private Hospital (TPH) Trauma Recovery Program has been running since 1998. It is a closed military specific Day patient group program which has been externally accredited by Phoenix Australia (ACPMH) or the Department of Veteran Affairs since it’s inception. It involves an intensive phase, short term and longer term follow-up sessions and is heavily outcome measured across a broad suite of diagnostic and symptom domains. It is a constantly modified, evidence informed, psychiatrist led multi-disciplinary program involving exercise, class work, in-vivo sessions, one-to-one therapy sessions, partner sessions and multiple complementary and psychoeducative/health promotion add-ons. The referral base for the program is Australia wide and it has become the busiest TRP in Australia by some margin, accounting for a quarter of all military or ex-military personnel who complete a TRP in Australia. According to independent external data collected by Phoenix Australia, the TPH TRP consistently achieves superior outcomes across all data points when compared with the National average. It is for this reason that we believe our model of care, if replicated elsewhere could achieve similar results.

**Bio:** Dr Khoo is a private psychiatrist in Brisbane and the Director of Medical Services at Toowong Private Hospital. He is the Chair of the RANZCP Committee for the Military, Veterans and Emergency Services Personnel Mental Health Network and has presented on behalf of the RANZCP to Royal Commissions, Senate Inquiries and Productivity Commission public hearings, as well as to the ADF and DVA. He is a member of the Department of Veteran’s Affairs Mental Health Expert Advisory Group. He is the Chair of the Open Arms National Advisory Committee. He is the Principle Psychiatric Advisor to the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation (GMRF) currently overseeing research in Psychopharmacology and Novel therapies, and Transition and Reintegration.

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**Abstract Author 2**

Janja Bojanic 1Zachary Steel 1,2

**Title:** Evaluating and optimising a traumatic stress injury care journey: From Evidence-Based Treatment to Evidence-Based Care

**Abstract:** St John of God provides inpatient and day programs as part of a clinical program for veterans, first responders, and frontline workers with service-related mental health injuries. Through a multimodal assessment approach, we have developed and linked injured first responders and veterans to a pathways care model that provides a symptom-targeted approach to mitigate factors undermining traditional trauma-focused treatments. This project aims to review and match the individual needs of veterans and first responders to a range of transitional, targeted, and follow-up evidence-based programs to address multimorbidity, moving towards a personalized care model where the right treatment is delivered at the right time. We present findings from a patient cohort service engagement evaluation, examining longitudinal changes in symptoms across care engagement. Outcome measures from specific outpatient programs at a psychiatric hospital in Greater Sydney were reviewed for the period from 2020 to 2024. These programs, included in the pathways model, encompass inpatient admission, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Trauma Recovery Program (TRP), and Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR). Other factors considered in relation to positive client outcomes included adverse events during programs, dropout rates, sustained outcomes, and readmission rates. The analysis examines the extent to which the targeted program of treatment care pathways demonstrates a pattern of improved or sustained clinical outcomes.

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**Bios:** Janja Bojanic is a psychologist and Allied Health Manager. Janja has had extensive experience working with the military and first responder population in a clinical setting. Since 2018 has participated and lead the trauma program developments for occupational injury at a large private psychiatric hospital. From 2015- 2018 Janja worked with ADF to implement rehabilitation services for transitioning members.

Zachary Steel is holds of the St. John of God Chair of Trauma and Mental Health, a collaborative initiative between the Trauma Service at Richmond Hospital and UNSW School of Clinical Medicine. He is past president of the Australian Society of Traumatic Stress Studies.

**Abstract Author 3**

Dr Katelyn Kerr, Dr Andrew Khoo

**Title:** Guilt and Its Relationship to Mental Illness and Suicide Attempts in an Australian Veteran Population with PTSD (Katelyn Kerr, Andrew Khoo)

**Abstract:** Guilt has long been recognised as a negative prognostic factor in treatment of mental health disorders and more specifically in military related PTSD. This study was a retrospective analysis conducted on 219 ex-service personnel diagnosed with PTSD who attended a Military Trauma Recovery Day Program. Veterans completed self-report questionnaires as well as a clinician-administered PTSD assessment tool. Demographic information and self-reported history of suicide attempts were also recorded. We will utilise findings from this 2021 study to revise the concept of guilt amongst a veteran cohort with PTSD, and then explore it’s relationships with suicide, PTSD and the PTSD symptom clusters, anger and alcohol use. We also will comment on the prevalence of this symptom in contemporary veterans vs Vietnam cohorts. We then will draw out meaningful translations of these findings creating utilisable tips for clinicians in everyday practice.

**Bio:** DrKatelyn Kerris the Lead Clinical Psychologist at Toowong Private Hospital Trauma Recovery Program, as well as being Manger of Therapeutic Capability and Culture. She also holds the positions of Adjunct Principal Research Fellow at the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention and Honorary Principal Research Fellow at Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation, as well as serving on a number of advisory boards. She has previously worked in a clinical role treating patients with suicidality in the only specialised self-harm and suicide prevention outpatient clinic in the Southern Hemisphere. Dr Kerr has also held roles as Senior Lecturer and Course Convenor for the Masters in Suicidology program at Griffith University. Dr Kerr was called as an expert witness for the Senate Inquiry and the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Dr Kerr has authored/co-authored peer-reviewed articles and book chapters relating to self-harm, suicidality, and military service-related PTSD, as well as a government report relating to optimal care pathways for people in suicidal crisis who come to the attention of first responders.

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**Abstract Author 4:**

Dr Grace McKeon

**Title:** Physical activity, moral injury, and the severity of clinical presentation: Findings from an inpatient ward for PTSD

**Abstract:** Posttraumatic stress disorder is associated with metabolic risk, low levels of physical activity and increased risk of sedentary behaviour. This is most evident in inpatient settings where opportunities to be active are often limited. In response to the growing recognition of the role of physical activity to prevent physical health comorbidities, St John of God Richmond Hospital has built an integrated physical activity program over the last ten years delivered by accredited exercise physiologists. This presentation reports on physical activity levels in an inpatient ward for service-related PTSD. N=103 patients with consecutive admissions completed a range of assessments, including physical activity (SIMPAQ) during an in-patient stay. Results showed over 80% of patients were meeting or exceeding the recommended physical activity guidelines of 150mins/week, significantly higher than the 22% observed in the general Australian population. Latent class analysis of clinical symptom profiles during admission showed that there was no evidence that symptom severity was associated with levels of severity. The introduction of an integrated exercise physiology program which offers tailored on-on-one and group-based support can effectively prevent inactivity. This approach not only yields significant health benefits and serves as an important adjunct to usual-care.

**Bio:** Dr Grace McKeon is an Exercise Physiologist and Post-Doctoral Research Fellow. Her work aims to promote physical activity among populations exposed to trauma including emergency service workers and refugees. Grace sits on the executive committee of the Australasian Society of Traumatic Stress Studies and co-leads the allied health SIG.

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**Bio:** Dr Grace McKeon is an Exercise Physiologist and Post-Doctoral Research Fellow. Her work aims to promote physical activity among populations exposed to trauma including emergency service workers and refugees. Grace sits on the executive committee of the Australasian Society of Traumatic Stress Studies and co-leads the allied health SIG.