

ISCRR Research Impact Showcase



Thursday 9th February 2023

Vicarious Trauma – additional questions

Responses by Carmen Schroder (ISCRR) and Grace Norrie (CPSU)

What meant by a "predictable response?"

A predictable response can be explained in two ways. The first is that it's a normal human response to be distressed by traumatic content, especially when engaging empathetically. The second is that research shows that vicarious exposure to trauma results in a substantial risk of mental injury (up to 50% of workers in some professions). Without effective prevention and intervention, we can expect workers who are exposed to traumatic content in the course of their work to be impacted negatively.

[Read more on the research here](#)

Did you find in some sectors the view was that training on vicarious trauma to new starters would impact on already poor recruiting?

Yes, research participants frequently reported feeling hesitant and unsure about when and how to raise vicarious trauma risks with new starters and staff more broadly. Vicarious trauma was commonly perceived as an individual mental health issue rather than a workplace injury; as a result, there is a common misperception vicarious trauma needs to be addressed by a professional. Fears of being unqualified and mismanaging discussions prevented the implementation of a proactive approach.

Strategies to directly address this were piloted as a part of the VTPAT project. This included embedding discussion of vicarious trauma-related hazards during formalised processes e.g. recruitment, onboarding, supervision (via wellbeing plans), and exit interviews. Findings showed the increased acknowledgment of the vicarious trauma risk inherent in the work had a normalising and destigmatising effect. The processes also provided a framework for discussing vicarious trauma that increased confidence to broach the topic.

[Read more on the evaluation here](#)

PLEASE NOTE THESE COMMENTS WERE GIVEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ISCRR RESEARCH IMPACT SHOWCASE PRESENTATIONS AND DO NOT COMPRISE OFFICIAL GUIDANCE OR ADVICE FROM THESE PRESENTERS OR THE ORGANISATIONS THEY REPRESENT.