

Change in trauma reactions over time among bystanders – A qualitative study

AM. Øvstebø¹²³, CA. Bjørshol¹²³, I. Johnsen³, TW. Lindner¹²³
1 The Regional Centre for Emergency Medical Research and Development (RAKOS), Stavanger, Norway
2 Stavanger University Hospital, Stavanger, Norway
3 University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

RAKOS

The Regional Centre for Emergency Medical Research and Development in western Norway

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

HELSE STAVANGER
Stavanger University Hospital

NORWEGIAN AIR AMBULANCE
FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

Bystanders to out-of-hospital cardiac arrests (OHCA) and other critical emergencies can experience a range of trauma-related reactions¹²³. In response, a national support system for bystanders was established in Norway in 2020⁴.

Among those who received support, 84% reported at least one trauma symptom or functional impairment. Half experienced difficulties with daily functioning, and one-third reported reduced work capacity¹.

Being a bystander can be a traumatic experience.
Photo: Marthe Berg Tvetene, SNLA

AIM

This qualitative study seeks to identify the factors contributing to changes in trauma symptoms over time and to assess the potential role of the national bystander support system in influencing these changes

Tentative RESULTS

Factors associated with a *reduction* in trauma symptoms:

- Gaining medical insight into the incident
- Feeling understood and acknowledged
- Learning and applying coping strategies
- Receiving support from the bystander support system
- Access to additional support (e.g., social network, healthcare professionals)
- Patient survival
- Time elapsed since the incident

Factors associated with an *increase* in trauma symptoms:

- Emotional burden of being a co-survivor
- Persistent feelings of guilt
- Concurrent stressful life events
- Absence of additional adequate support (e.g., social network, healthcare professionals)
- Delayed psychological impact

METHOD

Fifteen participants were selected based on changes in trauma scores over a six-month period (data from an unpublished quantitative study).

The sample included five individuals with a marked decrease in trauma symptoms, five with a considerable increase, and five with no change. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed using thematic analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

A range of factors contribute to how bystanders’ trauma reactions evolve over time. The bystander support system, however, emerges as a potentially cost-effective intervention that may alleviate trauma symptoms and facilitate recovery.

Support for first aid providers. Photo: Marthe Berg Tvetene, SNLA

CONTACT INFORMATION

Anna Marie Moe Øvstebø
Ph.D. candidate and project manager

E-mail: anna.ovstebo@sus.no
Phone: 0047 986 11 155

Stavanger University Hospital
Regional Centre for Emergency Medical Research and Development (RAKOS), Stavanger, Norway

The Norwegian Bystander support system:

REFERENCE

1. Øvstebø et al. Resusc Plus 2023;14:100373
2. Mathiesen et al. BMJ Open 2016;6:e010671
3. Dainty KN, et al.Circulation 2022;145(17):e852-e67.
4. Bjørshol et al. Resusc Plus 2023;16:100489