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The question that is being asked in this paper is whether police departments should require their officers to go to counseling. Police departments today do offer officers counseling but it's not so much enforced, it's merely an option, something that is there if they see fit to use. Many officers don't want to admit something is wrong, no one wants to admit if something is wrong, let alone an officer of the law. Officers are supposed to be tough and supposed to be fearless, someone who is willing to rush into danger head-on. Sadly, no one looks past all of this and looks at how this could affect an officer. Police officers are people too, not machines like many make them out to be. The purpose of this paper is to dive deep into the struggles an officer faces and the horrors an officer faces while on the job, it is to provide an understanding of why counseling is important within police departments.

The following research used a paper and pencil survey to assess programming for mental health and wellness in 7742 law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. A total of 465 respondents provided data to two open-ended questions to share several types of programs and services that would be beneficial for agencies to support officers who experience job challenges or stress. The qualitative data was analyzed via constant-comparison method by two independent coders who engaged in several techniques to aid in trustworthiness. The resulting themes included officer wellness initiatives, counseling, and the role of the overall agency culture to provide access to support and for reducing the stigma for police seeking services for mental health. Implications include the need for program and policy changes within law enforcement agencies.

Mental Health in Police Departments, Counseling: Yes, or No?

Table 2.

Prevalence of Mental Illness Diagnoses and Positive Screening Results for Mental Illness Symptoms Among 434 Police Officers

Variable	Lifetime diagnosis (n = 54) ^a		Positive screening result in past 2 wk (n = 114) ^b
	Not current (n = 28)	Current (n = 26)	
Anxiety	10 (36)	26 (100)	39 (34)
Depression	11 (39)	11 (42)	50 (44)
PTSD	19 (68)	0	69 (61)
Suicide ideation or self-harm	0	0	21 (18)
Sought mental health services in past 12 mo	9 (32)	9 (35)	19 (17)

Abbreviation: PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder.

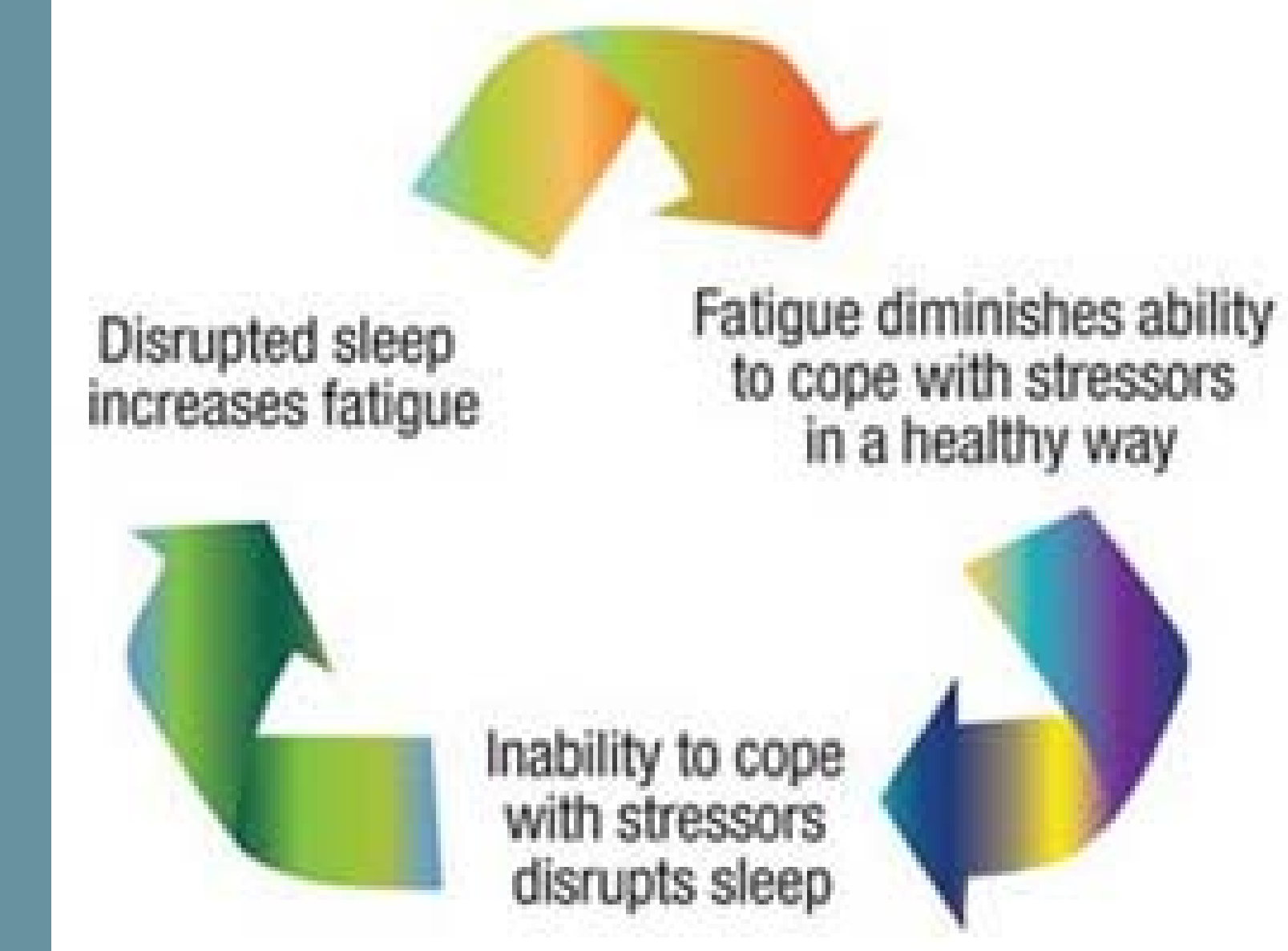
^aDepression, anxiety, or PTSD.

^bPositive screening result for depression, anxiety, PTSD, and/or suicidal ideation or self-harm symptoms in past 2 weeks.

Table 5.

Perceptions of Use of Mental Health Services

Perception	Examples
Lack of knowledge that an officer is experiencing a mental health issue	"The stress level, we get so accustomed to having the stress that that's the norm for us"; "Numb to it"; "You may not realize how close you are to needing that stuff because a lot of stuff, you go back and forth between you're at a worse spot, you're at a better spot. You kinda get used to being like that"; "Yeah, I'm fine. I'll deal with it. It's just a bad time and I'll come back"
Concerns about confidentiality within the department	"It doesn't mean that it's confidential and nobody here trusts this department, and if you do, you're an idiot"; "This place is like a high school. Words get out here and there"; "You didn't tell anybody. Somebody saw you and so-and-so told so-and-so"
Belief that psychologists cannot relate to their occupational duties	"My reaction is 'So what? Who are you?'; "I don't need to talk to somebody that has no clue what I'm trying to say"; "Unless it's someone here I don't want to talk to them"; "I don't want to talk to them. They don't get it. They don't know. They don't understand. They'll look you square in the eye and say 'I get it and understand.' I look at them and I go, 'No you don't.' 'No you don't, go back to class, go back to school, go back to where you came from'"
Stigma that officers seeking mental health services are not fit to do their jobs	"I think it's more so that nobody feels they need to go. When you think about it, well, people that go there, they got something wrong or an issue they can't handle"; "There's also the reprisal if you go see a shrink, you're



Fatigue can:

- Impair an officer's mental and physical ability.
- Create a cycle of fatigue.
- Limit job performance.
- Damage an officer's health.

Table 2 : Among officers with a current mental health diagnosis, 9 (35%) sought services in the past 12 months. Among those who screened positive for mental health symptoms, 19 (17%) reported using services in the past 12 months.

References

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