International Perspectives on Preventing Sexual Abuse

Symposium Chair: Kieran McCartan, Ph.D.
University of the West of England

This symposium will discuss current International perspectives, initiatives and research on preventing sexual abuse. The symposium will use an interactive style to focus discussion towards ongoing, and emerging, practices from the UK, USA, Canada, and New Zealand and bring in research about sexual violence and prevention efforts in other areas of the world. The symposium is built on the idea that a punitive response to sexual violence alone may not be the most effective strategy to help victims, stop offending behaviors and ultimately create safer communities. Given the fact that the vast majority of offenses are committed by someone offending for the first time, preventing first time perpetration offers an often ignored opportunity to reduce the number victims, intervene before anyone is harmed and also may prove to be the best investment of dollars for community safety.

Although some strategies vary, there is an emerging consensus towards a new and comprehensive public health approach to solving the global issue of sexual abuse. This public health approach, especially with a focus on primary prevention, opens up a number of original and adaptive solutions. More recently, a number of public health agencies such as the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have focused the attention and resources of public health on preventing the perpetration of sexual violence. This focus places ATSA and ATSA members as expert leaders in this area, as professionals who understand the etiology and developmental pathways towards offending behaviors.

All the papers will discuss the emerging programs, initiatives and research on primary prevention of sexual abuse perpetration, the evidence that shows which strategies can affect sexually abusive behaviors, as well as the impact that these schemes have had. In addition the symposium papers will talk about the challenges about developing as well as implementing prevention approaches, thereby sharing good practice and the developing knowledge base and resources for prevention.
UK Perspectives on Preventing Sexual Abuse

Kieran McCartan, Ph.D.
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Jon Brown, M.Sc.
NSPCC

This paper will discuss current prevention practices in relation to Sexual Abuse in the UK. The paper will start by discussing the current rates of prevalence, reporting, recording relating to child sexual abuse followed by a discussion of the estimated cost of this to the UK economy (Saied-Tessier, 2014). The paper will then discuss some of the leading prevention strategies currently utilised in the UK, their outcomes and evidence of effectiveness. The paper will end with a discussion on how to best frame research and evaluation relating to the prevention of child sexual abuse in the UK and next steps for research and practice.

Goals of the Paper:
1. Discuss current rates of prevalence, reporting, recording relating to child sexual abuse.
2. Discuss current prevention practices in relation to Sexual Abuse in the UK.
3. Discussion on how to best frame research and evaluation relating to the prevention of child sexual abuse in the UK, and what this means in an international context.

USA Perspectives on Prevention in Sexual Abuse

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Research suggests that only a more comprehensive multi-level approach to sexual violence prevention will integrate existing efforts to incarcerate offenders and provide services to victims into broader strategies to educate communities and change the very circumstances that allow sexual abuse to be perpetrated. With the growing interest in focusing prevention efforts on preventing the perpetration of sexual abuse, both evidence-based and promising practices will be discussed. The presenter will present arguments for changing the more reactive victim/offender paradigm towards a more proactive and comprehensive public health prevention paradigm; in particular, how a public health
prevention approach to sexual violence can be used to educate, protect, and change society to decrease the levels of sexual violence.

Goals of the Paper:
1. Provide an overview of the current trends towards primary prevention in the US and Canada.
2. Identify the evidence based programs that have completed rigorous evaluations.
3. Present case examples of how ATSA members can apply perpetration prevention strategies in their practice.

Primary Prevention Down Under:
Current Landscape and Future Directions for Research and Practice

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Behind the picturesque scenes of The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit, rates of sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand are among the highest in developed countries. In 2005, Te Ohaakii a Hine - National Network Ending Sexual Violence Together (TOAH-NNEST) was established, a national network of agencies providing specialist services for sexual violence prevention and intervention. In 2012, TOAH-NNEST instigated a comprehensive survey of primary prevention activities undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this presentation, findings from the survey will be presented including the scope of activities undertaken, and barriers and supports to primary prevention work. Findings will be discussed in the context of primary prevention research literature.

Consistent with findings from previous international surveys, evaluation of primary prevention activities presented a major challenge for many agencies. Participant satisfaction was the most common outcome measure evaluated, which has little relevance to evaluating the effectiveness of prevention programs in achieving their aims. Future directions for research and practice will be discussed, with particular attention to the evaluation of primary prevention activities.

Goals of the Paper:
1. Provide an overview of the current landscape of primary prevention activities in New Zealand.
2. Discuss the fit of current prevention activities in New Zealand in relation to best practice.
3. Provide an overview of methods and tools for evaluating primary prevention initiatives.