# ”Some things stick”: Secondary traumatization among police officers and medical personnel caring for raped women

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## Abstract

This presentation is part of a three-year research project titled “Female rape victims: Quality of initial police and medical care contact”. The project is funded by the Swedish Crime Victim and Support Authority, and led by Ph.D. Lisa Rudolfsson at Gothenburg Research Institute (GRI) at the University of Gothenburg.

Previous research show that professionals who meet raped women are affected by the stories they listen to, sometimes developing clinical symptoms similar to those experienced by the victim herself. In the literature, this is referred to as “secondary traumatization”, “vicarious trauma” or “compassion fatigue”. Although previous research has shown various symptoms that fall within what is termed as secondary traumatization, few studies focus on what psychological effects that can be distinguished specifically among first responding professionals, such as police officers and medical personnel, meeting the victim in an acute situation.

Based on focus groups with police officers and medical personnel (N = 28) a deductive thematic analysis was conducted focusing on secondary traumatization among professionals. The participants described being exposed to traumatic material and they showed signs of both cognitive and emotional changes. These changes affected their function as well as motivation when caring for raped women. Further, both medical personnel and police officers described a lack of support from their employers, forcing them to find both constructive and destructive ways of coping on their own.



## Biography

Enkela Sinani, is a master student at the Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg. In June 2020, she finished her studies to become a licensed clinical psychologist. This fall she will begin her clinical practice within the trauma field. During the study period, Enkela has been working in the specialist-psychiatry primarily conducting psychological treatments with asylum seekers and patients with PTSD. Parallel to her studies she is currently working in a project run by Save the Children conducting group therapies based on EMDR; an effective treatment for PTSD.

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