

Title: Physiotherapy Contributions to Military Operations: Canadian Experience in the 21st Century

Congress Theme: "Rehab in Military Operations"

Author: "Marsha MacRae, LCol"

Co-Authors: "Dan Trudel, Maj"

Institution: "Canadian Armed Forces"

Summary

"The 21st century marked a significant change within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) physiotherapy (PT) profession. In the mid-1990s the Canadian military restructured its health services to create an "operationally oriented, viable and cost-effective medical support system". This change, along with a high prevalence of musculoskeletal injuries in garrison, and increasing pressure from members and the leadership to maintain the continuity of care in theatre changed the direction of PT services in the CAF. In 2000 the Canadian Forces deployed its first PT officer (PTO) as part of peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. Since that time the CAF has deployed PTOs on multiple missions, primarily in Role 3 and 2E environments as well as in health engagement roles.

While the literature on the effect of the provision of physiotherapy services in theatres of operations has been increasing, there is a continued lack of studies examining the injury profiles of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel during operations. Additionally, there is little research on the impact of including physiotherapy services as part of the CAF medical support. Recent statistics on PTO workload, injury prevalence by body part, the priority of referrals, and the mechanism of injuries will be reported concerning current operations in Latvia. Future focus on more robust injury surveillance and outcome measures will be key for tailoring CAF PTO services for operational relevance."