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### Abstract Information

#### Abstract Title:

Effects of restorative justice conferences on post-traumatic stress symptoms among robbery and burglary victims: a randomised controlled trial

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Paper

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#### Abstract:

**Background** Treating undiagnosed post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) in crime victims is a public-health priority. We investigated the efficacy of police-led, face-to-face restorative justice conferences (RJC) in reducing PTSS among adult robbery and burglary victims willing to meet with the criminals who hurt them. **Methods** This study was embedded in 285 cases from two larger randomised controlled trials (RCTs) conducted in London, UK, as part of multinational prospective meta-analysis that is the subject of a Campbell Collaboration Systematic Review. Each case was assigned to either conventional criminal justice (CJ) proceedings only (n=147) or to those proceedings plus one RJ meeting (n=138). Participants were interviewed for PTSS levels by telephone one month following allocation; post-traumatic stress symptoms were the primary outcome. Blinding was not possible. Eighteen percent (52) of the cases in the primary RCTs were excluded because they had either multiple or juvenile victims. Of the 233 eligible cases, 39 cases randomised to CJ (35%) and 40 cases randomised to RJ (33%) were lost to follow-up. The modified intent-to-treat sample showed no tested differences between treatment groups. Both groups were interviewed at a mean of one month after random assignment. Analyses were based on intent-to-treat, both for main effects and within gender subgroups. **Findings** Victims assigned to RJC had half the median PTSS scores (6.0, range 2.0-15.0) of victims assigned to CJ (12.0, range 5.0-29.3) (p=0.007; d=0.431). Victims assigned to RJC were one-third less likely to exceed subclinical levels of PTSS than victims assigned to CJ (42% vs. 65%; p=0.004). Effect sizes were larger for women victims, using both median score (d= 0.608, p=0.01) and prevalence of clinical PTSS (RJC = 46%, CJ = 78%), than among male victims, for whom RJC benefits were non-significant. **Interpretation** Our results show that consenting victims who are assigned to police-led restorative justice conferences with their offenders have substantially lower levels of PTSS at one month than victims who are not. Subgroup analysis suggests that our findings are driven by larger benefits for female victims than for males. **Funding** Home Office for England and Wales; Metropolitan Police Service; Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation (UK); Jerry Lee Foundation (US)

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