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# An Assessment of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among Nationally Certified EMS Professionals

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## Abstract

**Objectives.** The primary objective of this study was to estimate the prevalence and severity of depression, anxiety, and stress among a cohort of nationally certified emergency medical services (EMS) professionals. The secondary objective was to determine whether there were differences between individuals who were experiencing depression, anxiety, and stress. **Methods.** A cross-sectional survey of 1,000 nationally certified EMS professionals was conducted. The survey included questions about demographic information, professional information, and mental health. The survey was distributed to EMS professionals through email and social media. The survey was completed by 400 EMS professionals. The survey results showed that 25% of EMS professionals reported experiencing depression, anxiety, and stress. The survey also showed that there were differences between individuals who were experiencing depression, anxiety, and stress and those who were not. The survey results suggest that there is a need for mental health services for EMS professionals.

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characteristics with each outcome. Results. A total of 64,032 individuals were eligible to renew their national certification and 34,340 (53.6%) individuals returned a questionnaire. The DASS-21 classified 1,589 (6.8%, 95% confidence interval [CI] = 6.4%–7.1%) EMS professionals as depressed, 1,406 (6.0%, 95% CI = 5.7%–6.3%) as anxious, and 1,382 (5.9%, 95% CI = 5.6%–6.2%) as stressed. Multivariable logistic regression estimates showed that paramedics (odds ratio [OR] = 1.31, 95% CI = 1.22–1.39), those working in county or municipal services (OR = 1.36, 95% CI = 1.16–1.60) or private services (OR = 1.32, 95% CI = 1.14–1.52), and those with  $\geq 16$  years of EMS experience (OR = 1.28, 95% CI = 1.01–1.62) had an increased odds of depression. A stepwise increase was found when estimating the effects of self-reported general health on the odds of anxiety (very good, OR = 1.84, 95% CI = 1.53–2.22; good, OR = 3.88, 95% CI = 3.32–4.67; fair/poor, OR = 10.81, 95% CI = 8.14–14.34). Likewise, paramedics (OR = 1.32, 95% CI = 1.23–1.42), those working in a private EMS system (OR = 1.35, 95% CI = 1.16–1.56), and those with  $\geq 16$  years of EMS experience (OR = 1.67, 95% CI = 1.28–2.18) had an increased odds of stress. Conclusions. This study was able to estimate the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress among a large cohort of nationally certified EMS professionals and identified statistically significant demographic and work-life characteristics that predicted depression, anxiety, and stress. Future research should attempt to follow EMS professionals prospectively to determine specific characteristics associated with occupational traumatic exposure and the development of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Key words: : emergency medical services out-of-hospital depression anxiety stress

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