The Short- to Medium-Term Predictive Validity of Static and Dynamic Risk of Violence Measures in Medium- to Low-Secure Forensic and Civil Inpatients

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BPsych (Hons)

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Clinical Psychology, School of Psychology, University of Newcastle, Australia

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Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Acknowledgment of Authorship
I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis contains a manuscript of which I am a joint author. I have included as part of the thesis a written statement, endorsed by my supervisor, attesting to my contribution to the joint manuscript:

I, Brayden Finch, attest that I was primarily responsible for the review of literature and the writing of the critical review, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript contained within this thesis. I received support from Megan Valentine, statistics consultant, for the data analysis and reporting of method and results. My work was forwarded to supervisors Dr Derek Gilligan and Dr Sean Halpin for review, and amendments were made based on their feedback. I am the primary author of the work contained herein.

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Thesis Abstract

The prediction and subsequent management of aggression in psychiatric inpatients is a crucial role of the mental health professional. This retrospective cohort study combines a critical literature review and a research paper on the ability of static and dynamic risk assessment measures to predict aggression in psychiatric inpatients in the short- to medium-term. The critical literature review presents an overview of the development of static and dynamic risk assessment measures before critically discussing the research on violence prediction in psychiatric inpatient populations over the short- to medium-term. The research paper examines the predictive validity of 10 static and dynamic risk of violence measures and subscales in 37 forensic and 37 civil inpatients residing in a medium-to-low security psychiatric facility over 1-, 3-, and 6-month follow-up periods. Retrospective file records were sourced to conduct an AUC analysis of the ROC curve for short and medium follow-up periods to test the ability of each measure to predict interpersonal violence, verbal threat, and any aggression. The hypothesis that dynamic measures would be better predictors than static measures over the short-term was supported. Albeit to a lesser extent, dynamic measures were still better predictors than static measures over the medium-term. This result was seen in both civil and forensic groups. Three previously untested measures were found to predict aggression within the sample. It is recommended that mental health services employ the use of dynamic measures when making short-term risk of violence predictions for civil and/or forensic inpatients.